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Sarah Bernhardt Brown

Charles Felton Pliginsk

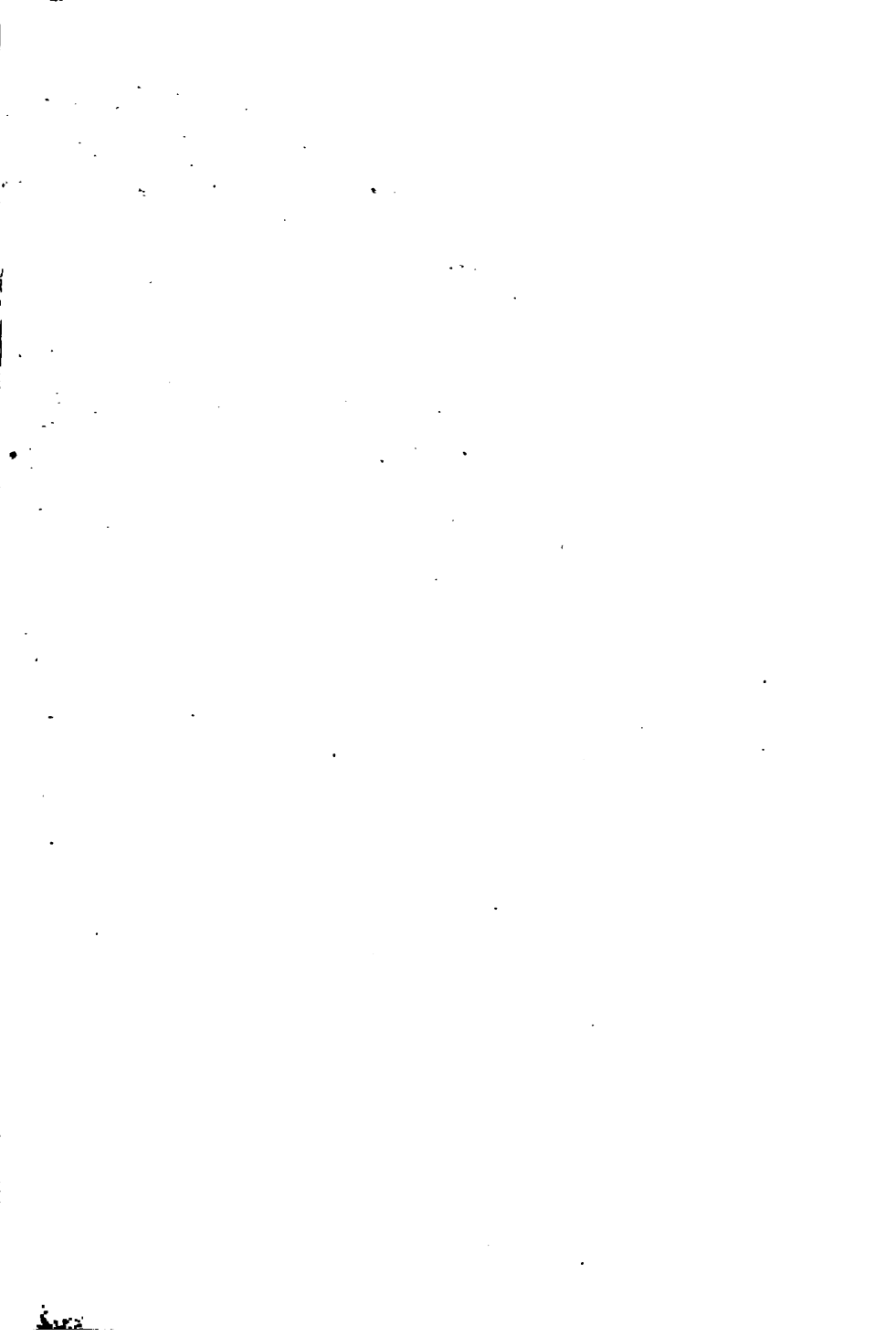
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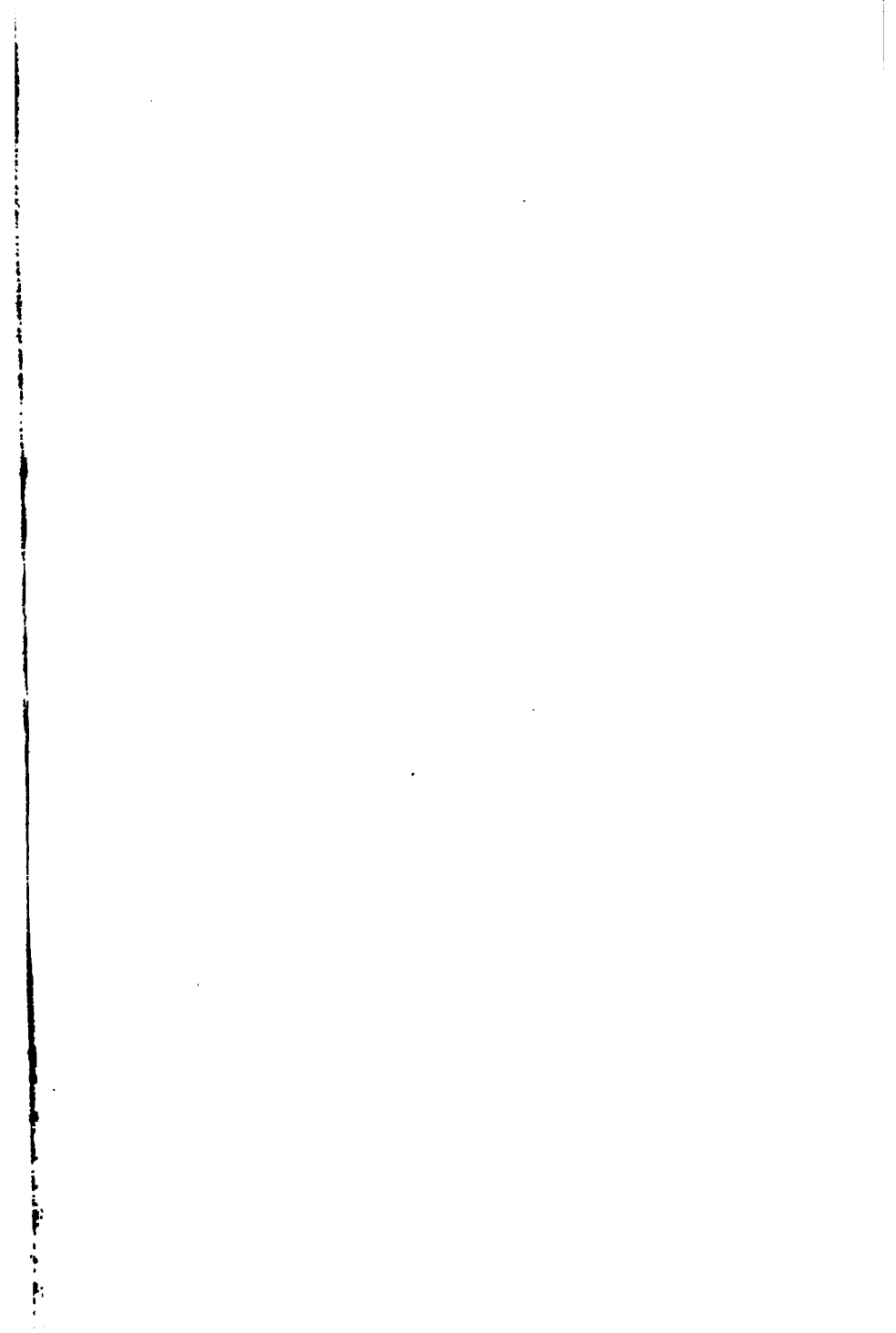


**THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
(CLASS OF 1882)
OF NEW YORK**

1918









WINNIFRED AND OLNEY

0
A Companion Volume to Quincy Adams Sawyer by the Same Author

Sarah Bernhardt Brown

AND WHAT SHE DID
IN A COUNTRY TOWN

A Dramatic Novel

BY

CHAS. FELTON PIDGIN

Author of "*Quincy Adams Sawyer*," "*Little Burr*," "*Blennerhassett*,"
"*The Climax*," "*A Nation's Idol*," etc.



THE J. K. WATERS COMPANY

14-20 BEACH ST., BOSTON, MASS.

1906

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**PUBLISHED JANUARY
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND SIX**

To
SARAH BERNHARDT
The Shining Light of the French Stage



and the
Artistic Queen of the Dramatic World

This Book

Is Respectfully Inscribed by the Author

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In my book "QUINCY ADAMS SAWYER," I related the experiences of a young Boston lawyer in a country town. Proud of his lineage, and possessed of an ample fortune, he was able to accomplish much by the aid of the latter that might otherwise have been impossible.

In the present work, the situation is reversed, and circumstances are different. The heroine is a young New York actress who, by the progress of events over which she had no control, is left penniless in a country town of anti-histrionic tendencies. Despite this fact, having no famous ancestry, springing, as she did, from the common people, so-called, she contrived, by the use of her wit, wisdom, and personal attractions, to win as great victories, comparatively speaking, as did Mr. Sawyer.

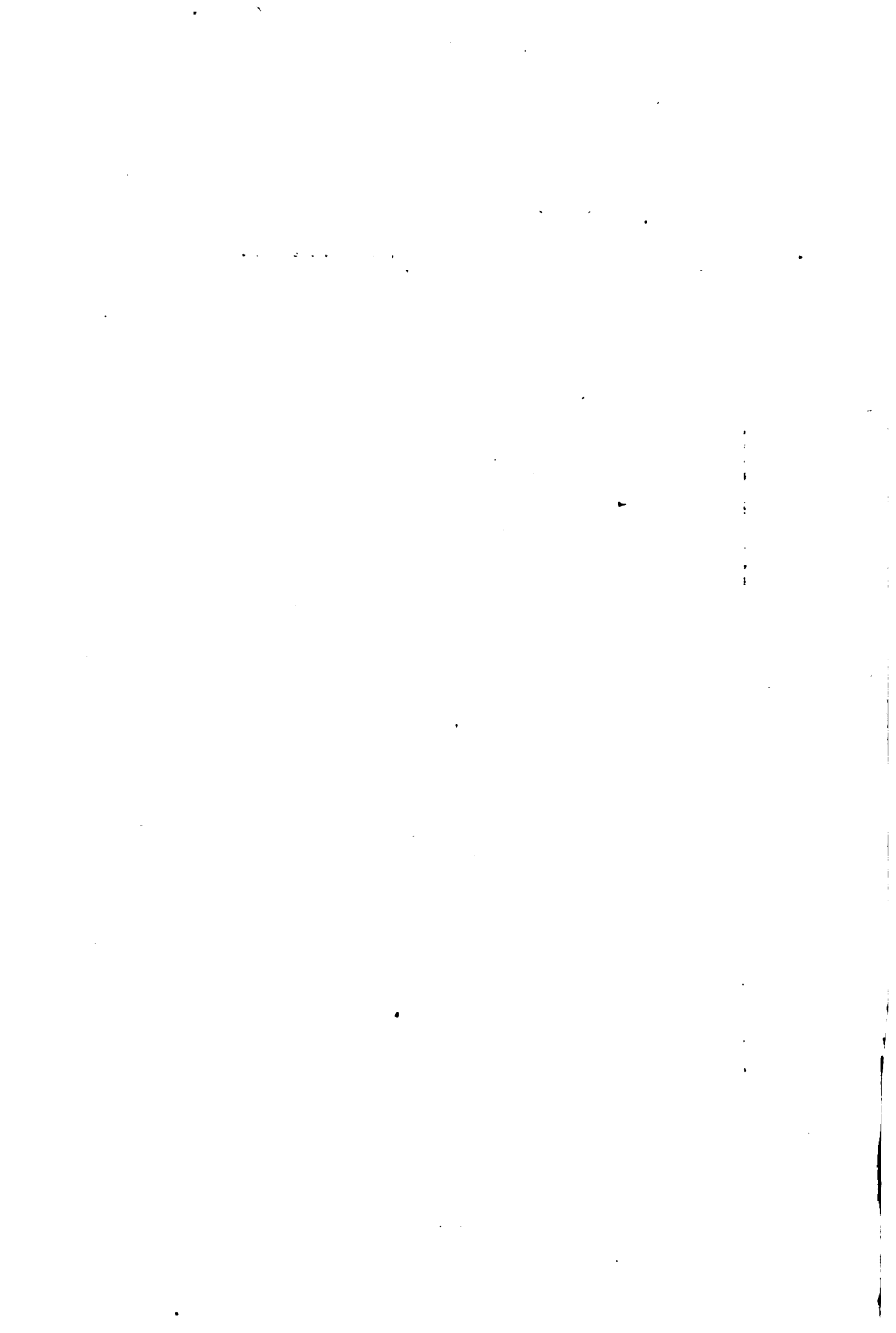
That the story of her adventures in "A Moral Town" might prove acceptable to the great reading public of America has been one of the motives which has prompted the writing of this book; another has been to show that neither good birth nor money is essential in the performance of humane or noble acts.

As in "Quincy Adams Sawyer," no particular locality is depicted; nor are the characters at the mines, in city, or country, drawn from living prototypes, but are wholly the creations of the imagination.

C. F. P.

Gray Chambers, 20 Mount Vernon Street,

BOSTON, MASS., November, 1905.



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Personel of the Book

ADELINA, Princess—daughter of King Meambrino.
Allurio, Prince—son of Rajah Rumptifoozle.
Annette—a servant girl.
Appleby, Tom—a Snickersville young man.
Atwood, Martha—daughter of Timothy Atwood; claims to have been married to David Dalton, having eloped with him.
Atwood, Timothy—called "Grandsire". Aged 83, and a resident of Snickersville, N. H.
Aunt Ida—Miss Dumaresque's aunt.

BALCOM, Old—a former mine proprietor in Dolby City, Montana.
Barnett, Abel—lawyer, Snickersville, N. H.
Barrows, Rev. Mr.—the clergyman at Burlow.
Barry, Ted—pressman of *The White Mountain Sun*.
Bartow, Tom—head barkeeper at Mrs. Harrison Goss's saloon.
Bentwood, Miss—an elderly maiden lady living in Snickersville.
Bogan, Mike—whose funeral causes trouble.
Bogan, Patrick—defendant in an assault case.
Bogan, Mrs. Bridget—wife of Patrick.
Brady, Robert—the real name of Mr. Riccadonna.
Brewster, Percy—Mr. Hosea Fogg's pseudonym.
Brown, Emily—mother of Sarah Bernhardt Brown.





Brown, Sarah Bernhardt—the real name of Winnifred Winton.
Burbank, Eli—the cause of an automobile accident.
Bush, Thirza—a lame lady.

CHOLMONDELEY, Rosa—a burlesque prima donna.
Clemson, Jake—the Snickersville barber, and a gossip.
Clough, Lem—a Snickersville farmer.
Coffee, Professor—a summer boarder at Lakeside.
Coffee, Mary Ann—the Professor's wife.
Craddock, Bert—a sportsman.
Cramer, Mary—in love with Uriel Gray.
Creedy, Jack—the owner of a predatory dog.
Crump, Hardy—a Western desperado.
Cutter, Abel—a peripatetic liquor vender.
Cutts, Elder—Pastor at Peachley.
Czyrkstecheltzkortcheldoszeffski—a Pole; Rosa Mulvey's husband.

DALTON, Mrs. Agnes—formerly Mrs. Harrison Goss.
Dalton, David—only son of Deacon Solomon Dalton.
Dalton, Solomon—Deacon of Union Church, Snickersville, N. H.
Danby, Dr. Daniel—the Snickersville physician.
Danby, Paul—son of Dr. Danby; in love with Betsey Sprowle.
Dangerfield, Olney—a comedian; member of Col. Hix's burlesque company.
Danks, Patience—the village dressmaker.





Davy, Little—four years old; Martha's son.
Day, Edgar—father of Miss Ida Day.
Day, Ida—a rich young lady from Irvington-on-Hudson.
Dodd, Eli—Col. Hix's clerk, with histrionic aspirations.
Dodge, Josiah—an ambitious young man.
Donaldson, J. Austin—editor of *The White Mountain Sun*, published at Snickersville, N. H.
Donaldson, Jim—who raised hogs; father of the editor of *The White Mountain Sun*.
Dumaresque, Miss Idaline—her stage name; author and actress.
Dusenberry, Chester—in search of Mr. Donaldson.
Dusenberry, Sophie Adelaide—"None wanted a husband so bad as she."
Dutcher, Stub—a hunchback; one of the Snickersville gossips.

FOGG, Hosea—assistant editor of *The White Mountain Sun*.
Fowler, Mrs. Patience—a sufferer from "rheumatiz."

GAMAGE, Peter—engaged in blasting rocks.
Gamage, Lysander,—Peter's son.
Gifford, Plummer—known as "Plum;" in love with Mandy Harkins.
Goss, Harrison—Agnes' husband.
Goss, Mrs. Harrison—proprietor of a saloon at Dolby City, Montana.
Gray, Uriel—waiting for his fortune.
Gridley, Cy—an amateur farmer.





HARKINS, Mandy—an orphan; runs her own farm.
Harvey, Wallace—of Willoughby, who plays the cornet.
Hix, Col. J. Orlando—a New York theatrical manager.
Hopkins, Calvin—a young farmer.

JEANNETTE—a Hindoo peasant.

KING Meambrino, the 33rd—a potentate of Hither India.

LAMB, Frances—a *nom de plume* of Rosa Cholmondeley.
Leeds, Caleb—aged 95; the oldest man in Snickersville, N. H.
L'Hommedieu, Anthony—first settler of Snickersville, N. H.
Lobsterclawski, Count—a burlesque villain.
Luce, Sim—an unfortunate sportsman.

MA'AM Gridley—Cy Gridley's mother.
March, Abigail—sister-in-law of Deacon Solomon Dalton.
Martin—Riccadonna's hostler.
Meacham, Mrs.—disgusted at the kittenish actions of Uncle Joe and the Widow Smith.
Melcher, Jack—coroner, Dolby City, Montana.
Merrill, Rev. Franklin—pastor of the Union Church at Snickersville.
Miggles, Joë—a tramp.
Milliken, Capt. Ezra—proprietor of the general store at Snickersville, N. H.
Milliken, Dorcas—Capt. Ezra's daughter.
Milliken, Thankful—Capt. Ezra's wife.





Mills, Abby—afterwards Mrs. Leander Thoroughbrace.

Miss Peasley's hired man.

Moreno, Agnes—maiden name of Mrs. Harrison Goss.

Mouton, Frances—real name of Rosa Cholmondeley.

Mudge, Martin Van Buren, Esq.—Ex-member of the N. H. Legislature.

Mugford, Hannah—"Aunt" to everybody in town.

Mulvey, Bat—a farm-hand and a gossip.

Mulvey, Rosa—Bat's daughter.

PARKHURST, Seth—lawyer and Justice of the Peace, Dolby City, Montana.

Parsons, James—foreman of the jury at Dolby City, Montana.

Peasley, Miss Tabitha—Mr. Donaldson's landlady.

Pelby, Anse—a Snickersvillian.

Pray, Phineas—looking for a place to settle.

Prescott, George—a camera fiend.

Prouty, Cy—a Snickersville farmer.

Pudley, Jedediah—a tract distributor.

Putney, Selina—a fine cook; afterwards housekeeper for Deacon Dalton.

QUIRK, Bernard—complainant in an assault case.

REED, Abijah—a man of violent temper.

Reed, Mary Ellen—"a daisy on the other shore."

Rhodes, Roxana—school-teacher and organist, Snickersville, N. H.

Riccadonna—proprietor of the restaurant and boarding-house at Snickersville, N. H.





Rodgers, John—trial justice, Snickersville, N. H.

Rumptifoozle—a Rajah of Farther India.

SCALES, Enoch—farmer, town constable, and mail-carrier.

Scales, Ezra—Uncle of Enoch.

Scales, Matilda—Enoch's sister.

Short, Erastus P.—“gone over the river.”

Short, Susie—engaged to Mr. Donaldson.

Sias, Joe—“runs a blubber wagon.”

Skinner, Ruth—a friend to the unfortunate.

Smith, Jefferson—farm-hand and gossip.

Sprole, Betsey—Deacon Sprole's daughter.

Sprole, Isaac—Deacon and selectman.

Stark, Ebenezer—the Snickersville carpenter.

Stark, Mrs. Patience—the carpenter's wife.

Steele, Sidney—a member of Col. Hix's burlesque company.

Strong, Jonathan—had five wives.

Strong, Simon—a creditor of Mr. Donaldson.

Struthers, Amri—a Snickersville farmer.

Struthers, Mrs. Amri—known as “Melie.”

Swazey, Liddy—Uncle Joe's wife.

Swazey, Uncle Joe—widower, looking for a wife.

THE Widow Smith—who flirted with Uncle Joe Swazey.

Thoroughbrace, Leander—lately of Laconia, now of Snickersville. N. H.,
in search of a safe and profitable investment.





Thoroughbrace, Mrs. Abby—wife of Leander.
Tinkham, Mrs. Betsey—mother of lost child.
Tinkham, Elizabeth—Mrs. Tinkham's daughter, the lost child.
Tobin, Ezra—who made Thirza Bush's wooden leg.
Truesdale, Jimmy—stage doorkeeper at the Criterion Theatre.

VAN LOO, Miss—an elocutionist.

WALKER, Job—cattle-dealer.

Watkins, Job—whose mother-in-law is subject to fits.

Watkins, Sophia—Job's wife.

Weintge, Gottlieb—Stub Dutcher's real name.

White, Jason—a Snickersville farmer.

White, Hannah—Jason's wife.

Widow Foss—who lost her cow.

Wilkes, Eben—clerk for Lawyer Barnett; in love with Sally Winkle.

Wilkins, Tom—who played the bugle on the Fourth of July.

Winkle, David—a Snickersville farmer.

Winkle, Sarah—David's wife.

Winkle, Sally—David's daughter.

Winton, Winnifred—the stage name of Sarah Bernhardt Brown.

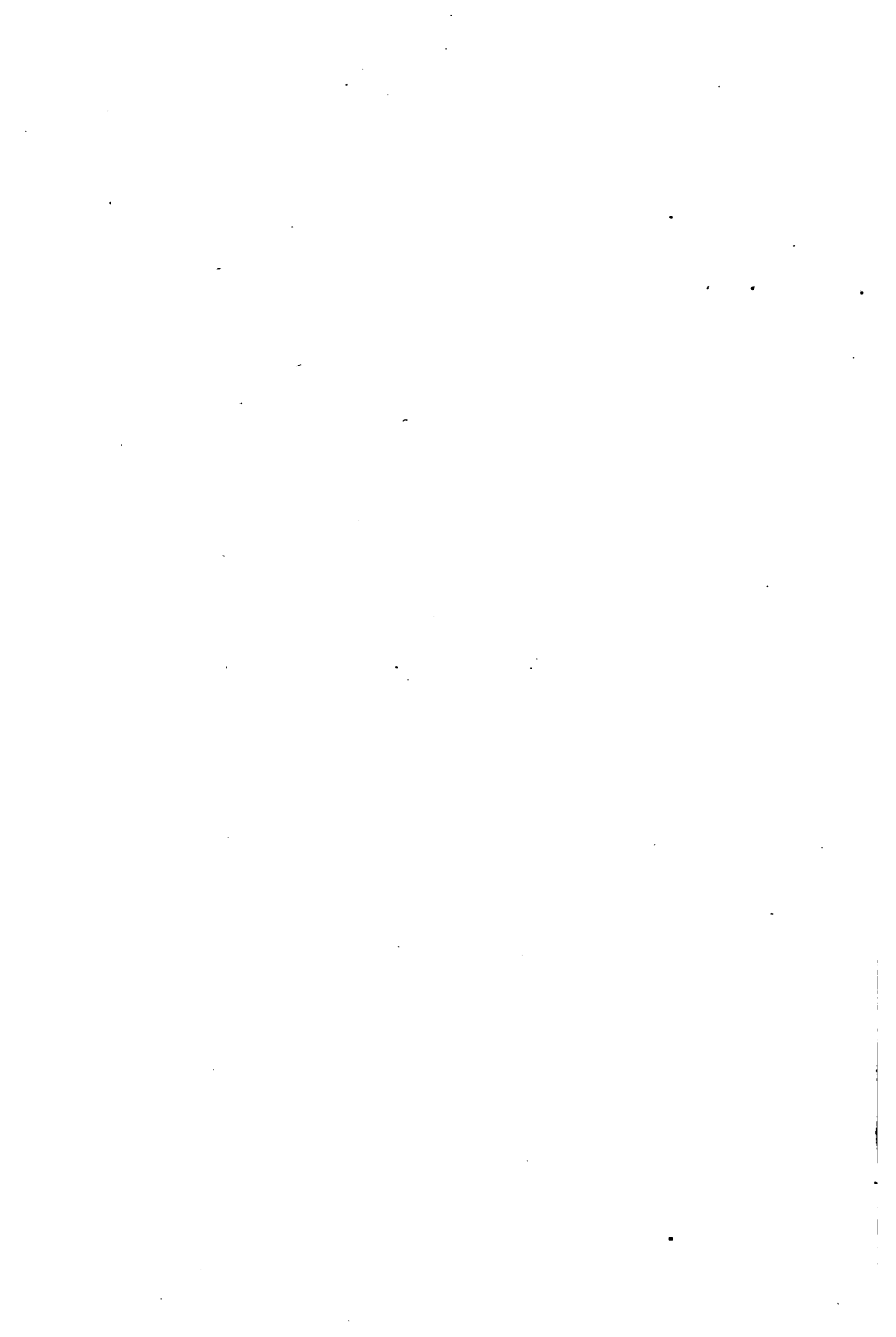
Witherspoon, Jonathan—a Snickersville farmer.

Witherspoon, Maria-- Jonathan's daughter; usually called "Ri."

Witherspoon, Tryphena—Jonathan's daughter; usually called "Tri."

Woods, Gideon—a friend of David Dalton.





SARAH BERNHARDT BROWN

CHAPTER I

"A BAD BEGINNING MAKES —"

"Is that you, Hardy Crump?"

It was a woman's voice that uttered the words, and into her face came a look of astonishment followed by one of terror.

"Can't you see that it's me?" said the man, as he threw himself into a chair and tossed his wide-brimmed cowboy hat upon the floor. In his belt was a brace of pistols, and the handle of a long knife also showed itself above the top of the belt.

The man and woman sat regarding each other for a while. The man seemed to enjoy her perplexity.

"You've put off mourning," he remarked.

"You ought to wear it all the time," she retorted.

"Is that so?" he answered, gritting his teeth. "The worst sin I ever committed was to rid you of a miserable, drunken husband."

The woman shuddered.

He went on: "It wouldn't have laid on my conscience if I'd have done it in fair fight, but as I did it to oblige you —"

"How you must have suffered," said the woman, sarcastically.

Mr. Crump crossed one leg over the other. "Well, I have that, and now I have come back to claim my reward."

"I paid you at the time," said the woman, sharply.

"I know you did — for the deed. Now I want my pay for the three years of weary waiting I have passed away from you."

The woman was silent. She may have divined his meaning, but she gave no evidence of it.

Mr. Crump changed the subject : " I suppose business has been good, Agnes, since I went away."

The woman nodded.

" They told me old Balcom sold out to a young fellow named Dalton. Has he struck it rich ? "

The woman elevated her eyebrows.

" How much is he worth, one hundred thousand ? "

The woman showed the fingers of both her hands.

" A million ! " cried Mr. Crump. Then he whistled, and next he brought down the foot, which had been in mid-air, with a loud thump upon the floor. " Does he own it clear ? "

The woman nodded.

" I suppose you hire this saloon from him."

The woman for answer raised one of her hands, then dropped it upon the arm of her chair.

Mr. Crump leaned forward and fixed his glittering eyes upon her face. " Does he own you ? "

The woman started as though she had been stung, then she faced him. " No, and no other man ! "

Mr. Crump chuckled : " I am glad of that," he said. " Partners in crime should enjoy life together." He started to his feet. " That's why I'm here, Agnes. I've come to claim you, and I will have you."

There came a sharp knock at the door. The woman, glad of the interruption, opened it, quickly. A man entered, but stopped abruptly when he saw Mr. Crump.

" Mr. Dalton," said the woman, " this is an old friend of mine, Mr. Hardy Crump."

The men shook hands and seated themselves. The woman stood irresolute for a moment, then left the room.

"I hear your property is paying well," remarked Mr. Crump.

"Prospects are good," said Dalton, "unless those New York speculators bring prices down."

"Western man?" interrogated Mr. Crump.

"No, from the East," was the answer.

"Mrs. Goss is a fine woman," remarked Mr. Crump, irrelevantly.

"She always pays her rent promptly, so I guess she makes it pay," was Dalton's response.

The subject of their conversation entered at that moment, followed by one of the barkeepers bearing a tray upon which was a bottle of whiskey and glasses.

"I suppose this is in honor of my return, Agnes," said Mr. Crump, as he filled a tumbler half full of whiskey, swallowing the contents at a gulp.

Dalton regarded his companion as he would have a wild steer. He turned a small quantity of liquor into a glass, when Mr. Crump cried:

"Hold on! I'll join yer. It's a long time since I've had any good whiskey."

The tumbler this time was more than half filled, and was tossed down in the same manner. The liquor was fiery and took effect quickly.

"Just before you came in," Mr. Crump began, "Agnes and me were talking over old times. We used to be good friends, and I reckon time hasn't changed us much."

The woman's face was averted.

"The fact is, Dalton, I was just telling her that I couldn't stay away from her and had come back to marry her."

Mr. Dalton arose: "In that case," said he, "I propose the lady's health."

The woman sprang to her feet. Her face was flushed and her large black eyes shone brilliantly. "Do not drink that toast, Mr. Dalton. What Mr. Crump says is not true. I shall never marry him."

"I think you will," said Mr. Crump. "I'll leave it to Mr. Dalton, here. I'll tell him a little bit of our past life and perhaps he'll advise you to become Mrs. Crump."

"I do not care to hear it," said Mr. Dalton. "A woman's past is her own. If she does not choose to reveal its secrets, no man should be mean enough to do so."

Mr. Crump was angry now: "But I'm going to tell you just the same!" he cried, and as he spoke he placed his hand upon the handle of his knife.

Dalton saw the motion and stepped behind the heavy chair in which he had been sitting. "I repeat what I said before, Mr. Crump; only a mean man would pry into matters which don't concern him."

Crump drew his knife from its sheath: "I'm mean, am I? I can tell by your face that you're thinking more than you say."

"You're right," said Dalton, "I am."

Crump was not to be silenced: "Harrison Goss, Agnes's husband, was a miserable drunkard and used to beat her."

"Shut up," said Dalton, sternly.

"I'll talk if I want to," Crump growled.

Dalton started towards the door.

"Yes, go, Mr. Dalton," cried Mrs. Goss. "He's not worth minding."

What followed was but the work of an instant. It takes but a short time for a man's angry passions, aided by liquor, to be aroused, and when under their dominations the

greatest of crimes follows quickly. If Mrs. Goss had anticipated what was to take place, she would have thrown herself between the combatants at the risk of her own life, but it all passed too quickly.

Crump grasped Dalton's arm and drew him violently away from the door. Dalton was young, strong, and brave, and he resented this treatment by giving Crump a stinging blow in the face.

With a yell of rage, Crump made a pass at Dalton with his knife, but the young man dodged the blow, grasped a chair, swung it in the air, and brought it down with crushing effect upon Crump's head. The man dropped like a log, the knife flying from his hand.

"You must go," cried the woman to Dalton. "No, not that way," as the young man started towards the door which led to the saloon. "He will follow you and kill you; I know him. Go into my room," and she pointed to another door.

As soon as the door closed behind him, the woman picked up the knife and bent over the prostrate man. "You devil," she hissed between her teeth, "you came here to marry me, did you? You'll have to be satisfied with the company of Mr. Harrison Goss and not that of his wife."

As she arose to her feet she saw blood upon the knife, and with a cry flung it from her. Then she went into the other room. "He's dead," she said. "You've killed him."

Dalton, whose brain was not clouded by liquor, had quickly repented of his act — but it was too late. "What shall I do?" he cried.

"Say it was in self-defence," was the woman's reply.

"But I struck the first blow. They will call you as a witness, and when you tell the truth ——"

"I shall not speak," said the woman.

"They will make you," he cried.

"They cannot if I am —"

Dalton looked at her in wonderment. Could it be possible that she would kill herself to save him? Did she love him? He had never thought of such a thing as loving her. There had been a young girl far away in the East whom he had loved and who had loved him truly — but she was dead! What could the woman who stood before him mean by her words? He looked at her inquiringly.

She understood the questioning gaze. "They cannot make me speak if I am —" she repeated.

"What?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Your wife!"

CHAPTER II

A LOOK BACKWARD.

AGNES Moreno was the daughter of a Mississippi boatman. He was of Spanish descent and had married a French Creole with whom he had become acquainted in New Orleans. Agnes was the oldest of a family of seven children, having three brothers and three sisters. They were mediocre in mind and never rose above the soil which they tilled, or the river upon which they plied the oar.

Agnes was of a different mold from her brothers and sisters. She combined the persistency and revengefulness of some Spanish natures with the vivacity and adaptability of the French woman. Thus the lines of her inherited personality were strongly marked and easily traced.

At seventeen, Agnes was the most beautiful girl in the Missouri town in which she lived. She had many offers of marriage, but refused all of her suitors. Her knight came at last, however, in the person of a young man who, having inherited a small fortune, was on his way westward to invest it in the mining business, having roseate dreams of a great fortune becoming his in the future.

He met Agnes and she listened to his stories even as Desdemona listened to Othello's recitals of the victories which he had won. True, Harrison Goss was not yet a conqueror, but he had won her heart, and Agnes felt that together they could obtain whatever they wished. Without the innate confidences and ambitious hopes of youth, this old world of ours would soon become stagnant, and might as well stop in its course.

Agnes had an unloving nature. She had one of those hearts in which love is never inspired but once. If such love fails of fruition, it is usually succeeded by a feeling as widely different from true love as are the poles apart.

Agnes loved Harrison Goss; and despite the objections of her parents, she married him and left home and kindred, with no more display of feeling than she would have shown at pulling an apple from its parent stem.

The young couple went westward into the copper mining region. Money was needed to develop properties which were sure to pay great returns, and Harrison Goss's little capital did not remain long idle.

As they had hoped and believed, fortune favored them. Returns from mining properties, though large, are quite slow in coming in and there is often lack of ready money. In all mining towns there is a quick way of making money. The word "making" is appropriate, for it could not come in faster if one owned a mint.

In Dolby City, as the mining section was called, there was but one liquor saloon, and that was in a rough, tumble-down shanty. The owner was a hard drinker himself, and the brawls and murderous quarrels that had taken place there were a scandal, even to a community which thought less of law and order than it did of personal liberty and lucre.

Agnes broached an idea to her husband and he grasped it eagerly. In a short time a building was erected, the largest and best constructed one in Dolby City. The entire front portion was devoted to the saloon, while at the back were a kitchen, a sitting room, which was used on occasions for a dining room, and a chamber.

The night that the saloon was opened to the public, it remained open until three o'clock the next morning, and then the doors were closed only because everything drink-

able had been consumed. Dolby City was dry until a new supply was received. There was no lack of ready money now. The great attraction of the saloon was the beautiful Mrs. Harrison Goss, or "Queen Aggie" as she was called by the miners, who refused to take any change when their favorite drinks were mixed by her fair hands. Woe to any imprudent miner who presumed to indulge in any familiarity. If one dared to so offend, Queen Aggie would take his money and then throw the liquor in his face, making him the laughing-stock of the company.

Prosperity is fatal to many, and Harrison Goss was one of the foolish many instead of the wise few. He became personally interested in his own stock and trade, and his downward career was swift and short. A great change came over Agnes. She loved still, but it was the man's money and not the man. She had many admirers, but she kept them at arm's length.

One day a stranger came to Dolby City. He was fully six feet in height, well developed, with muscles fit for a giant. Ignorant of the rules of the saloon, he ventured to compliment Queen Aggie in terms that led to his receiving the customary salute, which was followed by the usual chorus of laughter.

It was followed by something else, too. Hardy Crump, for that was the stranger's name, squared off, and in a few minutes had turned the laughter of half a dozen miners into groans. Then, turning to Queen Aggie, holding a seven-shooter in each hand, he commanded her to take a towel and wipe his face dry, or he would clean out the place and see that nobody came into it while he remained in town.

Queen Aggie was equal to the occasion. "I am happy to comply with your request," she said. "You are the first man with any spunk in him who has ever stood up to this bar. Have one with me."

The majority of women would have hated a man who had thus publicly conquered them. A new feeling arose in the woman's heart. She admired courage, pluck, power. Hardy Crump became a permanent resident of Dolby City and was always a welcome visitor at the saloon. No words of love had been spoken between Mr. Crump and Mrs. Goss, but Mr. Goss's suspicions were aroused and he made frequent visits to his own bar so that he might get up sufficient courage to voice them.

"The man who keeps a saloon ought not to drink," said Mr. Crump to Mrs. Goss, one day. "It lowers the tone of the place. They tell me that's what killed the other saloon, and yours will go the same way. I am thinking of starting one myself. I would if I could get you to help me tend bar."

"He would never consent," said Agnes.

"No, I suppose not," remarked Crump. "But if he keeps on as he's going now, you'll soon be your own mistress."

Unguardedly the words came from her lips: "I wish I were."

About a week after this conversation, Mr. Crump asked Mr. Goss to go fishing with him on the river. "You have been drinking too much, Harry," he said familiarly, "and it will do you good to look at water, even if you don't drink any."

Two went, but only one returned.

"Where is Harry?" asked Agnes.

"Come in," said Mr. Crump, and they went into the room back of the bar. "It wasn't my fault," said Crump. "He had a bottle with him and he drank the whole before we had been out a half an hour. It made him crazy, and he would stand up in the canoe. Over it went. I can't swim and I should have gone down too, but I hung on to the boat and I managed to push it ashore."

"How long ago was that?" asked Agnes, as she placed a hand upon his arm.

"About half an hour ago," said Crump, carelessly.

Agnes stepped back and fixed her piercing black eyes upon him: "Hardy Crump, you are a liar and a murderer! I am my own mistress, but you are not my master and never will be. For my own sake, not for yours, I will give you a chance to save your life. Leave this town to-night or you will hang on a tree to-morrow morning. And, mind you, never show your face here again. How quickly your clothing dried, Mr. Crump," and she placed her hand on his arm again. "I thought you were too smart to let the devil lead you half-way."

The man looked up sullenly: "I'll go," he said, "and give you time to think it over. I did it for your sake. I'll go," he repeated, "but I'll come back for you, and when I do, you'll go my way or we'll both go the way he has."

CHAPTER III

MRS. AGNES DALTON

As the words "Your wife" fell from Agnes Goss's lips, David Dalton turned sharply, a look of incredulity on his face.

"You are joking!" he exclaimed.

"Am I?" was her sententious query. "You will find out to the contrary."

"What do you mean?" he cried. "Was this a trap?"

"I never expected to see the man. I hoped never to. He killed my husband years ago. Harrison was a good man at heart, but prosperity was too much for him. You have avenged his death, and if I had no other reason I would love you for that."

"Love me!" and the incredulous look came into his face again.

"Why not?" she asked, and her voice was low and pleading. "If ever a woman needed protection, I do. Harrison led me into this life so that we could make money quickly. We made the money, but our troubles came with it. I do not like this life; I wish to get above it, but I can't do so alone."

Dalton hardly realized the situation, events had followed each other so quickly. He tried to pull himself together.

"What did you mean by saying that I would find out to the contrary?"

"Nothing. I should not have said it. I did not mean what you think, but remember his dead body is in there. I shall have to tell them, for he must be taken away. He shall not stay here all night. I could not sleep — I shall not as it is."

"And what then?" asked Dalton.

"They will notify the coroner. I shall not speak. I shall not say a word until to-morrow morning. I shall say nothing then, if —"

Again that pleading look.

"What is best for me to do?" he asked.

"Go home at once," she said. "Walk out as though nothing had happened. I could. I will see you early in the morning — long before the inquest."

Dalton did not look toward the body of his assailant as he passed through the room. If he had done so, he would have seen the blood-stained knife upon the floor. He would then have divined the truth — and the whole course of his life would have been changed and this story would not have been written.

When Dalton reached home, he lighted a cigar and sat down to consider the swift and untoward change which had taken place in the current of his life.

"Why did I go there?" was the question which he asked himself a dozen times. "I do not love her, but she fascinates me."

As he sat smoking, his mind went back a few years to those calm, peaceful days he had passed in the quiet little New Hampshire town in which he was born. He had been a "lone chick" with no brothers or sisters for companions. His father was a pious man — called a good man by his neighbors — but in his home he was mean in all matters requiring the expenditure of money, and harsh in his punishment of the slightest infraction of what he considered to be the moral law.

What real happiness David had as a boy, had been found in the home of Timothy Atwood, whose granddaughter, Martha, had been the first and only love of his childhood, youth, and manhood. Despite the threats of

his father, he made her his wife. He had returned to ask his father's forgiveness, but had been driven from the door. His father was wealthier than his neighbors, while Timothy Atwood was the poorest of them all.

He could not stay and be a burden, so he had parted from the woman he loved and come West to make a fortune for them both.

He had made the fortune, but of what avail. He had written to his wife many times, but no answer had come. In his despair he had written to his father, and in the reply was a crushing blow. His young wife Martha was dead.

He lay down, but not to sleep soundly. His fitful slumber was filled with dreams, and they were all of those happy days—so few—with Martha.

He was still dreaming of the green fields and the fragrant woods, through which he had walked so many times with the woman whom he had loved, when there came a sharp rap upon the door, repeated again and again with increasing vehemence.

He sprang to his feet (for he had thrown himself upon the bed dressed as he was) and admitted Mrs. Harrison Goss.

"What time is it?" he asked.

"Six o'clock," she answered, "and the coroner will hold the inquest at ten, in our saloon," and she accented the adjective. "We have much to do before that time."

"I have been thinking," said David, "that perhaps my wife is living, after all. My father hated her family. He may have got possession of my letters to her and have written me that she was dead just to keep us apart. What do you think of that?"

"I think," said the woman, "that if you do not follow my advice, even if your wife is living, she will be a widow

before night. If you should be arrested for bigamy I will testify that I knew about your past life before I married you. Then you can cast me off and go scot free, as men usually do."

About eight o'clock Lawyer Seth Parkhurst, the only Justice of the Peace in Dalton's Mines, as the settlement was called, had two visitors, both well-known to him. He was greatly surprised to see them at such an early hour, and very much astonished when he heard the object of their errand. A twenty dollar gold piece, pressed into a willing palm, removed all his misgivings, and at half-past eight he shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Dalton, wishing them long life and prosperity.

At ten o'clock, Jack Melcher, the coroner, placed both hands upon the edge of the bar and vaulted into a sitting position upon it. He then impanelled the jury, every one of whom was a miner and in the pay of Mr. Dalton. As David looked at them, he thought to himself "I could have bought them all off." Then he reflected that he had bought the only witness, and he had paid her price.

"A man's been killed," said Coroner Melcher, "and somebody did it. This ain't one of those rough and ready towns where a man can murder another without answering for it. Our honored employer, Mr. David Dalton, has made rules for his mines and we must abide by them, hit where it may. We are beyond the reach of the State law, so Mr. Dalton has made one for us — and that is, horse-thieves and murderers shall be hung, and sneak-thieves and drunkards be kicked out of town. If we ain't gentlemen, it's our own fault."

The coroner's remarks were greeted with shouts of approval, and one of the barkeepers handed him a drink of whiskey, which seemed to be very acceptable.

"Now," said Coroner Melcher, "judging from where

this fracas took place, I suppose Mrs. Harrison Goss knows more about it than anybody else. Mrs. Harrison Goss, hold up your right hand ; swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

She stood up, as requested, and faced the company, every one of whom was known to her personally.

"Mr. Melcher," she began, "I wish to ask if my testimony will be required."

"And why not?" asked the coroner, sharply. For the time being he knew he was the biggest man in the town.

"I am willing to give my testimony, but I must give it in my real name —"

Every face in the room was turned towards her and every ear listened for her next words.

She smiled brightly: "I am the wife of Mr. David Dalton."

Coroner Melcher pulled at his rough, unkempt beard. "That alters the case," he said, finally. "You can tell what you know, but, of course, you ain't obliged to say anything against your husband. The court has heard something, but it ain't supposed to know anything but what it gets from your evidence."

"When you have heard my story," said Mrs. Dalton, "you will free my husband from even a suspicion of crime."

"That's what we're here for," remarked the coroner.

Every head was bent forward, the better to hear her testimony. Some looked longingly towards the bar, but they knew there would be no opportunity to put it to its legitimate use until the inquest was over.

Mrs. Agnes Dalton spoke in a low voice, but distinctly: "Mr. Dalton has been in the habit of visiting me quite often. Last evening when he arrived, the late Mr. Hardy Crump had preceded him. Before Mr. Dalton's arrival

Mr. Crump had used insulting language to me and he persisted in doing so before Mr. Dalton, who remonstrated with him. Mr. Crump, who was under the influence of liquor, assaulted Mr. Dalton, drawing a knife with the evident intention of killing him."

"Where is the knife?" asked the coroner.

The knife was produced and identified by the witness.

Mrs. Dalton continued her testimony: "They grappled with each other, and in the scuffle Mr. Dalton procured possession of the knife and warned Mr. Crump to keep away, but he drew a pistol and would have shot Mr. Dalton if he had not knocked it from his hand and given him the blow, in self-defence, which cost Mr. Crump his life."

Then Mr. Melcher remembered that the witness had not been sworn, but that was an omission which could be easily remedied.

"Hold up your right hand, Mrs. Dalton."

The woman complied.

"You swear that you told the whole truth and nothing but the truth — so help you God!"

"I do," said the woman, firmly. She looked at her husband, but his face was turned away from her.

The next witness called was Tom Bartow, the head barkeeper. Being duly sworn, he testified:

"I knew Hardy Crump. He was around here several years ago when Harry Goss was living. They went out fishing together and Goss got drowned."

"Keep to the front, Tom," remarked the coroner. "We want to know what you heard, not what you remember."

"Well, as I was saying," Tom went on, "Crump came in first. He asked for Mrs. Goss and I told him she was in there," and as he spoke he pointed to the door of the room. "He went in, but I couldn't hear nothing."

"Did you listen?" asked the coroner with a chuckle.

Tom grew red in the face. The jury and bystanders laughed heartily. Even Mrs. Dalton could not repress a slight smile.

"Well, not exactly," said Tom. "But you see he was a tough looking customer and I felt that it was my duty to my employer to keep my ears open, and if she called for me, to sail in and help her."

Those who had laughed, now applauded.

The witness went on: "A little while after, Mr. Dalton came in, and he went in there, too. Everything seemed peaceable. Then Mrs. Goss — beg pardon, Mrs. Dalton, — came out and ordered in some whiskey, and I concluded matters were all right, took a drink myself, and thought no more about it. Next thing I heard was what sounded like scuffling; then I heard a noise — sort of a smashing kind — then it sounded as if somebody fell down flat on the floor. Mrs. Goss — I mean Mrs. Dalton — did not call for me, and, as it wasn't my fight, I kept my mouth shut. When a customer asked me what was goin' on in there, I told him they must be breakin' up housekeepin'."

"Who was the customer?" asked the coroner.

"I don't know his name," said Tom. "It was that big, red-headed feller that's been prospectin' for gold over in Sampson's Gulch. I guess he hain't found any, for he stood me up for the drink."

"That'll do," said the coroner. "I'd like to ask Mrs. Dalton a question."

The woman stood up.

"Recollect that you are under oath," said Mr. Melcher. "What was that smashing sound that Tom spoke about?"

She answered quietly: "When they were fighting

for the possession of the knife, they tipped over a chair that was in the way."

"Did you pick it up?" asked the coroner.

"No," was the reply.

"You may sit down. Now, Mr. Bartow, did you see that chair when you went in? You're under oath."

"Yes," was the reply. "I tried to stand it up, but one leg was broken—they must have fallen on it when they were fighting. It must have been rickety, you know."

"Well, I guess we've heard all we're likely to," remarked the coroner. "With your permission, Mrs. Dalton, the jury will retire into your room and make up their verdict."

While they were gone Agnes tried to attract the attention of her husband, but he sat stolidly, with his eyes half closed.

The jury was not out long. Mr. James Parsons, the foreman, held a piece of brown paper in his hand, upon which the verdict had been written with the stub of a pencil which, fortunately, one of the jury had in his possession.

"We find," read Mr. Parsons, "that the late Hardy Crump came to his death by a wound inflicted upon him by a knife in the hands of Mr. David Dalton, but we also find that said wound was inflicted in self-defence, and to protect a lady whom we all esteem and respect."

The verdict was greeted with cheers.

"I see no reason to find fault with that verdict," said Mr. Melcher. "It seems according to the law and the evidence. Mr. Dalton is hereby acquitted in accordance with the power invested in me as coroner. The jury is discharged and this court is adjourned till circumstances call us together again."

As Mr. Melcher jumped from his judicial position upon the bar, Mr. Thomas Bartow and his assistants took their positions behind it.

"Gentlemen!" cried Mrs. Dalton, and all eyes were turned towards her. The words she uttered were welcome ones to the thirsty throng.

"Mr. Bartow," she said, "remember, at our expense, till closing time to-night."

CHAPTER IV

A TURN OF THE WHEEL OF FATE

THE newly-made bride naturally expected that her husband would remain with her to do the honors of the occasion. The miners, who were her guests, drank toasts to her, and would not be satisfied until she went behind the bar and mixed a bowl of punch, for Jack Melcher declared that Queen Aggie could give Tom Bartow points and then beat him at brewing a rum punch.

Agnes looked around for her husband, but he was not to be seen. She knew what it meant. He understood the situation and had gone home to think it over. She would go too.

When she entered David Dalton's house, he looked up and asked calmly: "Why are you here?"

"Is it not a wife's place to be with her husband?" was the answer.

"Under certain circumstances, yes," said David Dalton, "but not under the present ones. I understand you, and you know that I do. You had a motive in marrying me —"

"It was to save your life," the woman broke in.

He smiled grimly. "I do not think it was in great danger, but we will let that pass. I will not beat about the bush. I will never live with you. I did not kill Hardy Crump."

"Who said you did?" the woman retorted. "But even if you did, were you not acquitted?"

David's face had a stern, resentful look: "It was you who killed him. I did not touch the knife, and the verdict was that the knife caused his death."

The woman approached him, and would have put her hands upon his shoulders but he stepped back. Then she looked up at him pleadingly.

"I think he would have died from the blow you gave him. I only wished to make sure. If he had revived, he would have shot you dead. He had no mercy in him. Years ago he murdered my husband because he fancied I was in love with him. I always hated, despised, loathed him. If you had not come as you did, I believe he would have killed me, for I would have refused him. I would have said 'NO' as long as my tongue could utter the word."

The man did not relent. He spoke no word of encouragement—there was no sign of forgiveness.

The woman started back; there was a fierce light in her eye. She cried, scornfully: "How ungrateful you are! Are you sorry that he is dead? Do you wish you could change places with him?"

David answered as though he had not heard a word that she had spoken: "Perhaps my wife is still living." Then he voiced the thought which, lately, had come to him often: "My father hated her and her people. This story of her death may have been my father's scheme to keep me away from home—and her."

It was the woman's turn now: "You seem to forget Mr. Dalton, that your second wife is living, although you have doubts as to your first. Let me give you a piece of advice. Go East at once and find out the truth. If she is living, you can cast me off. If she is dead—we will wait and see what we'll do."

"But you married me for my money," David blurted out.

"I am a poor woman," she replied, "and poor girls and poor noblemen have done the same for many, many years. But I would have been a good wife to you and a

true one. I killed him rather than submit to the unholy union that he would have proposed ! ”

Her voice fell and became softer in tone. “ Go home, David, and find out the truth. I do not blame you. I would rather have none of you than the little fraction of a lover that you are to-day. Don’t worry about the mines ; there is no man you could get who could manage them better than I can while you are away. Good-bye,” and her voice trembled, “ I am going back to my old home — and you are going back to yours.”

David found the trip an uneventful one from the mines to Chicago. He had plenty of money with him, and he remained over to see the sights in the great Western metropolis ; in fact, he had never been in a big city before. He had seen them from the car windows, but such views are not usually inviting.

It is the man who travels little who is obliged to put up with poor accommodations. The experienced tourist provides for his journey and orders his dinner. When a man is travelling nothing is too good for him, and there is never too much of what is good.

David was not an experienced traveller. When he arrived at the station to take the train for New York, he found that there were no vacant seats or berths in the Pullman cars, and he was obliged to make the trip in what may appropriately be called a second-class first-class manner.

David took a seat under the window, dropped his head upon his hand, and began to think. What a lot of thinking there was to be done before he reached the home of his childhood. Perhaps he would find his wife alive and well — his first wife, as Agnes had suggested. Perhaps she was lying in the little churchyard. If so, he would put flowers upon her grave, and then go back to meet his fate in the West.

"Is this seat engaged, sir?"

David looked up. Before him stood a man nearly six feet in height, rotund in person, with a round, red face, a closely clipped moustache, and, as David quickly noticed, flashily dressed.

David did not speak, but shook his head and drew himself closer to the window. The rotund gentleman threw himself into the seat with a bump, deposited his dress-suit case with a bang upon the floor beside him, tipped his hat upon the back of his head, wiped his forehead with a heavily perfumed handkerchief, and, turning to David, asked: "Going East?"

David thought that ordinary politeness required more than a nod, so he said: "Yes, New York."

"We shall be company for each other," remarked the stout gentleman. "Business, I suppose?"

David's reply was monosyllabic: "Partly."

"You don't seem very lively," said the stranger. "Lost a friend?"

David began to appreciate the situation: "Don't know," he replied. "I am going home to see."

The stout gentleman laughed heartily. "Ah, I see, some other fellow has been trying to cut you out?"

"I'm afraid so," was David's response.

"Don't give up the ship," said his companion. "If you'd had the ups and downs that I've had, you'd be ready for anything, and be glad that it wasn't worse. Now, in my business, one day you may be up on the top-most wave of success, and the next day sink so deep that even your creditors can't find you."

It was David's turn to question: "Stocks?"

"Something like it — stockings, or rather tights."

David looked puzzled, and the stranger noted the expression.

"I'll make my meaning a little plainer."

He passed a card to David, who read: "Col. J. Orlando Hix, Proprietor and Sole Manager of Hix's Hibernian Minstrels. 40! Count 'em. You'll find them all there."

The gentleman went on: "I am a theatrical manager. Did a capital business through Michigan, but came to grief in Minnesota. Never saw such a frost. We had forty bill-boards, with a minstrel on each one to advertise the show and I had three brought into the theatre just to make it look home-like. Paper, of course." He laughed heartily. "Will you exchange cards?" and he held out his hand.

"I am sorry," said David, "but I have no cards with me. My name is David Dalton. I operate a copper mine out west."

"Ah, I see," remarked the Colonel. "Going East to sell stocks?"

"No," said David, "I own the mine clear."

Col. Hix revolved in his seat and looked full into David's face. "How is copper now?"

"Booming," said David.

"Would you advise a man to invest now?"

"There was never a better time," David answered.

"Well," said the Colonel, resuming his former position, "if I make some money on my next venture, I'll take a flyer. If copper mines were selling three for a quarter—" He stopped. "I'd borrow the money and buy 'em."

At that moment a voice was heard: "Tickets, please!"

David had placed his in his hatband, and the conductor punched and replaced it.

After some fumbling in half a dozen pockets, Col. Hix produced a ticket which the conductor scrutinized very carefully.

"Where did you get that ticket?" he asked.

"I bought it," said the Colonel, cheerily.

"Oh, of course," said the conductor. "I'm sorry, but I can't take it."

"Of course, you can't," remarked the Colonel. "I'll give it up just before we get to New York."

"You don't understand," said the conductor. "That ticket has been used once and the punch holes filled up. I'll wager you bought it from Hilliker, the scalper."

"Did you hear that?" asked the Colonel, turning to David. "Paid my last dollar for it—I'm strapped, as the razor said to the barber—and from present appearances I shall have to walk to New York. And just think of that money in the Manhattan Bank waiting for me to come and take it out."

"I can accommodate you," said David.

"Will you?" cried the Colonel, grasping David's hand. "A friend in need is a friend indeed. I'll give you a check which you can cash when you reach New York," and he drew a small check book from an inside pocket. "If you've no objections make the loan just five dollars over the fare."

The transaction was soon over and the conductor's demands satisfied.

"I'll send that ticket to my lawyer in Chicago and that Hilliker will refund my money or go out of business. I never let a beat get the best of me. Allow me to thank you, Mr. Dalton, for your kindness which will never be forgotten. I am going into the smoking car. My nerves are a little jarred over this incident."

After the Colonel's departure, David relapsed into his old, thoughtful mood. The conversation with the Colonel had taken him out of himself. He cared nothing for the money, if the check proved to be worthless. What

he wanted was wife, love, and happiness, and all his mine's wealth could not buy these for him.

He did not know how long he sat in his pensive mood. Prompted by some impulse he took the Colonel's baggage, which obstructed the passage-way, and placed it in the rack above his head. It was very heavy and it was with difficulty that he raised it to the desired position.

He had but just resumed his seat when there came a dreadful crash. There was a rending and splitting of wood, the crash and fall of broken glass, loud cries and frightened screams of his fellow passengers—a heavy weight fell upon his head, crushing him down beneath the seats, and he knew no more.

When he regained consciousness, a sweet-faced nurse, in a neat uniform and pretty cap, was bending over him.

"You are better," she said.

"I don't know. Is this New York?"

"Oh, no," said the nurse, with a smile. "New York is a long way off. You are in a hospital about a hundred miles from Chicago."

He said no more, and the nurse, after adjusting the bandages about his head, disappeared from view.

David was young, strong, and healthy, and his recovery was rapid. When the doctor said he might get up, he asked for his clothes, which were brought to him. They had been cleaned and mended. He felt in the inside pocket of his vest, but the money was gone. The nurse made inquiries at the office, and brought back word that no watch, money, or other valuables had been found upon him when he was brought to the hospital.

Should he write to his wife in the West to send him some more money? No! She would hear of the accident and perhaps think he was dead. So much the bet-

ter. She should not hear from him until he had learned the truth about that other wife in the East.

He had asked for writing materials and they were brought to him. He said to himself: "I will write to my old friend Leander Thoroughbrace, in Laconia, and he will send me the money to take me to my old home in New Hampshire."

CHAPTER V

WANTED — A PARTNER

ON the seventh floor of the Chinese Building, a tall skyscraper, situated on Broadway, near Fourteenth street, in metropolitan New York, a young man sat tilted back in an office-chair, his feet upon the desk before him, while he industriously puffed the smoke from a cigarette into lazily-moving rings above his head.

The room was a business office and finely furnished. Upon the floor was a Brussels carpet, bright in color and of a marked design, indicating that the person who selected it admired strong effects. There were easy chairs, richly upholstered, and a luxurious lounge covered with green leather. There were two desks, one flat and the other a roll-top. The walls were covered, where an available space could be found, with large and small theatrical posters, lithographs, and programmes. A rack for holding newspapers stood in one corner of the room, and a telephone was upon the wall back of the roll-top desk. If a stranger had been induced by curiosity to open the various doors leading into the room, he would have found that one communicated with the hallway, while the other led into a smaller room, evidently used as a private office. Judging from the wall adornments, a person acquainted with the theatrical profession would have decided at once that the office was that of a theatrical manager, and his conclusions would have been correct.

The young man took up a newspaper which lay upon the desk before him and ran his eye swiftly down one column after another. He was short in stature, with hair closely approaching brick-red in color. It was cut *à la pompa-*

dour, and the broad forehead and bright black eyes gave one the immediate impression that he was a very smart young man. If the opinion of the young man himself on this point could have been obtained, it would have agreed exactly with the opinion previously expressed. The young man, who was a clerk in the office, threw the newspaper upon the desk and laughed heartily:

"That's a scorcher! Old Hix will go down to the *Scandal* office and kill that manager. Here's the old man's advertisement for a partner in one column and right side of it a warning to investors to beware of snide managers and snap companies. That editor must know Hix. At any rate, he will before ten o'clock. Perhaps he is an old acquaintance."

He arose, took up a Derby hat of the latest style which lay upon the desk, tilted it upon the back of his head, ran both hands into his pantaloon pockets, and walked up and down the room.

"When I go into the theatrical business, it will be with Hix for a manager. Of course, I'm going on the stage. I've been thinking about a good name for a long time. My own name is good enough for business purposes, but it would never do in the profession — Eli Dodd! Dodd is bad enough, but whatever prompted my venerated dad to tack on Eli for a front name, is more than I know. I might have fared worse though, for his name was Adoniram and grandfather's name was Hezekiah. I suppose if a man is going to have a Christian name, he might as well have one of the good old-fashioned sort. When I used to go to Sunday school, up in Vermont, I believe they told me Eli was a prophet — and that's what I've got to do — make profit out of Eli."

He opened a drawer in the desk and took out a sheet of paper. "I've been printing some names to see how

they'd look. Reginald de Montmorency — Algernon Fortescue — Hildebrand Smythe — they are all good names, but as I shall probably have to begin my professional career by announcing: 'The carriage waits, my Lord,' they do sound a little heavy. But how grand it will be some day when I play the lord and some other aspirant will have to tell me that the carriage is ready!"

The door opened suddenly, and a stout gentleman entered. He is no stranger, for he is the same person who made the acquaintance of Mr. David Dalton, soon after leaving Chicago, but who, fortunately, having gone to the smoking-car, which was at the rear of the train, had escaped injury in the terrible accident of which his travelling companion had been a victim. Mr. Dodd quickly slid into the chair before his desk and was industriously engaged in arranging letters and papers which lay upon it, before Col. Hix's attention was attracted to him. The Colonel removed his top coat, threw it upon the sofa, and placed his silk hat carefully on the roll-top desk, which he had opened. Mr. Dodd knew that his employer was ready for business and, wheeling about in his chair, said:

"Good morning, Colonel."

The Colonel's reply was not a repetition of his clerk's friendly salutation:

"Any letters?"

Mr. Dodd crossed the room with a number of letters in his hand: "Yes, sir, seven; five for you and two for Mr. Dangerfield, and yours are marked personal."

The Colonel replied: "Oh, that's usual! That's usual! Business men always do that so it will reach the right partner."

"Very handy for the married ones," said Mr. Dodd in an undertone.

Col. Hix opened one of the letters, but before reading it, looked up and said, sharply :

"Dodd, run over to the Criterion, and see if Dangerfield is there, and if he is, tell him I want to see him."

Mr. Dodd, who was evidently used to complying quickly with his employer's wishes, was out of the room in an instant.

The contents of the Colonel's letters were not particularly edifying, judging from his remarks as he threw the last one upon the desk :

"Confound these people ! Do they think I can go out in the park and pick money off the trees ? It has always been my misfortune to have more reputation as a capitalist than money to back it up." Glancing at the letters, he went on : " These letters are marked private, and for the good of my business I hope they'll stay so."

He took the letters up and placed them upon the desk one at a time before him as though he were dealing a hand of cards : " Furniture dealer—carpet man—past landlady—present landlord—and clothes cleaner—that's a nice lot of personal friends for a man in my position ! Well, there are duns that cannot be undone. I'm afraid they will be overdone. My past landlady gave me a board-bill instead of soup for the last three weeks before I decided to go a—go to the Hotel Dam—fine lunch counter—see all the boys—treat—cheap—they pay as I go."

He tried to put the letters in his pocket, but they caught in the lining, which was torn.

"Ha !" he cried : "Another ragged edge, but not one of despair, for I'll be hung up for a better suit of clothes than that miserly old clothes-cleaner's hanging on to."

The office door was opened part way and a young man, shabby-genteel in appearance, stepped in :

"Anything today, Colonel?"

The Colonel looked up quickly, recognized his visitor, and then suddenly, began regarding intently a written sheet that lay before him :

"Don't you see I'm busy?"

"Beg pardon, Colonel," said his visitor. "That's all right,—I'll drop in again," and he disappeared.

"I owe him three dollars back salary. He's earning it over again. I don't object to his dropping in — makes the office lively—gives it a business-like look to a stranger."

The Colonel fell into a contemplative mood: "I have tried thirteen original schemes to make money during the past year. I'm not a superstitious man, but I'm going to make it fourteen. That last dodge of mine must be a go. Now, this office—best there is in the city—beats the Mayor's and didn't take a cent of ready cash, not a red. Every article here has my monogram on it—I. O. U."

He caught sight of the morning paper on Mr. Dodd's desk and it was soon in his hands.

"I wonder if they got my ad. in. I left it last night at the up-town office, but they wouldn't promise. I don't see it. A whole day's interest lost on borrowed money. I'll have to discount it when I pay it." The door opened and the Colonel turned quickly. It was Mr. Dodd.

"Jim says he will send him over when he comes in."

Noticing the paper in the Colonel's hand, he asked: "Did you see the ad. in the *Scandal*?"

"Is it in?"

"Why, of course, it is," said Dodd.

"I don't see it. Where is it?"

Mr. Dodd took the paper and pointed to the advertisement. The Colonel held up the paper and regarded it with a pleased look upon his broad, florid countenance.

"A rare \$5,000 chance. An old, experienced, and responsible manager of over twenty years' standing, wishes a partner to assist in developing a great and entirely new dramatic enterprise, which will inaugurate a new and strikingly original era in the world of amusement. Anyone with the small capital of \$5,000 can invest it in an easy, safe, permanent, and profitable manner, and at the same time gratify a taste for theatrical life and obtain a glimpse behind the scenes. Write or apply to J. O. H., Room 729 Chinese Building—9-2."

"Now, there, if I were a business man with money, looking for an investment, that advertisement would fetch me!" cried Col. Hix, as he finished reading.

"Yes, and there's a reading notice in the *Scandal*, too," remarked Mr. Dodd.

"Is that so?" said the Colonel. "I asked them to give me a line. I like the *Scandal* for that. They always treat a man tip-top."

You will find a line in the next column," said Dodd. As he spoke he turned away, saying *sotto voce*: "That will be a treat for the old man!"

The Colonel held the paper at arm's length: "What the—?" "What's this?" and his voice rose to a high pitch.

"Caution to would-be investors. Owing to our large and daily increasing circulation, our columns are made use of both by those wishing to obtain partners and by those desirous of securing opportunities for profitable investment. It should be borne in mind that we are in no way responsible and do not vouch for the business honesty of our advertisers. The majority, no doubt, are reliable, but some are, undoubtedly, frauds. Our advice to our readers is to consider every man a scoundrel until he proves himself to be an honest man. Especially beware of theatri-

cal schemes. The city is full of fly-by-night managers who are constantly devising schemes to entrap the unwary. Their victims are called angels, and it is not long before their wings are clipped."

The Colonel threw the paper upon the floor with a gesture of disgust! That's the way with these newspapers! They take my money, but don't want me to get anybody else's."

Mr. Dodd, who had been watching his employer, clearly divined his feelings, and commented inwardly: "I thought that would fit."

The Colonel turned and addressed Mr. Dodd: "I will never pay another dollar into that *Scandal* as long as I live. Such newspapers are a disgrace to the community. Don't you think so, Mr. Dodd?"

The young man thus appealed to, responded: "They always find plenty of room for base-ball players, and prize fighters, and suicides, and murderers."

"Oh, yes," said the Colonel, "but the reporters do that. They are a good set of fellows and must earn their living some way, but the men I am talking about are the ones that write such lies as that," and he gave the newspaper a vicious kick, "and call them editorials. If you have any trouble with a writer, you can't find him and have it out with him. The only name that an editor has is We, and they will never own up which one wrote the article, and you can't very well clean out the whole establishment. What more right has an editor to abuse a man in his newspaper than I have to go round to his friends and tell lies about him?"

"But you would not do such a thing," said Mr. Dodd, as he ran his fingers through his brightly-hued pompadour to conceal an irrepressible smile.

"That's so," said the Colonel. "Of course, I can't

demean myself by dropping down to their level and it is impossible to lift them up to mine. I ought not to notice such things, but that article does make me nervous. Got a cigarette, Dodd ? ”

The young man hunted through his pockets and finally produced a package of Sweet Caporals. The Colonel took one, lighted it, and put the package in his pocket. Mr. Dodd regarded him, but said nothing.

“ I wonder where Dangerfield is,” said the Colonel. “ You must find him right off. Something must be done today. There are those telephone fellows. I can’t get within speaking distance of them until I pay them.”

“ It don’t work,” said Mr. Dodd.

“ I know it,” replied the Colonel, “ but I hope they will leave it here. It gives tone to the office. Dodd, run over to the Criterion again. I must see Dangerfield.”

“ Got a cigarette, Colonel ? ” asked Dodd.

“ No—oh, yes, certainly,” and he passed the bunch to Dodd.

The young man put one in his mouth, and the others in his pocket. “ Thank you, Colonel. I will go right over.”

The Colonel approached the telephone and regarded it attentively. Then he took a string from a desk drawer and, attaching it to the instrument, gave it a quick pull. The action was followed by a sharp ring from the bell. The Colonel smiled : “ That’s a happy thought of mine. It will do the business when anyone comes in. Well, I must go and put on my office coat. I hate to see a business man sit around in his office in his best clothes,” and as he uttered the words, he vanished into the private office.

CHAPTER VI

A LETTER FROM A LADY

THE office door was opened and a dainty little body stepped into the room. She wore a flaring picture hat, made of black lace and a plentiful selection from those innumerable ornamentations which artistic milliners fasten so deftly in places where they can easily be seen. Beneath the hat was a luxuriant head of dark hair, and a pair of bright brown eyes, capable of casting roguish glances, but which could look prim and demure, and even severe. The cheeks were flushed with health, the figure well rounded and supple. She wore a tailor-made dress of dark red cloth, was neatly gloved, and from beneath the skirt a little *bottine* peeped out.

"There must be somebody here. The door was unlocked." She stepped back and regarded the name on the door. "J. Orlando Hix. I thought this was the right place. I haven't seen the Colonel since last Christmas and I haven't seen the money I loaned him to get the company out of town with, either. He must be doing very well to have such a handsome office. Olney wrote me that he was going out with a new company of the Colonel's, and that the Colonel could tell me where he was boarding. I sent Olney a letter yesterday telling him I should be here to-day—this morning. I sent it in the Colonel's care."

The young lady espied the two letters on the top of the roll-top desk.

"Oh, here it is," she cried, as she took them up. "No it isn't. Both from the same person. I wonder who is writing to Olney. It's a lady's writing, too."

Miss Winnifred Winton looked perplexed: "I wonder where my letter is. I mailed it last night." Then she broke into a merry laugh. "No wonder it isn't here. I dropped it in the letter box without any stamp on it."

She looked at the letters which she held in her hand, carefully regarding the postmarks: "Laconia, New Hampshire; one mailed two days ago and the other a week before that. Probably she got tired of waiting for an answer and wrote again. That's just like a woman — when she's in love. I wonder if these are love letters. To be sure, Olney and I are not actually engaged, so far as words go — but if looks speak louder than words, and they say they do, we are, decidedly. I will give these letters to Olney myself, but before he gets them, I will find out whom they are from and what's in them."

While Winnifred was toying with the letters, Col. Hix entered from the private office, but did not observe that he had a visitor:

"I'm glad I put on this coat, for I found a letter in the pocket from Rosa Cholmondeley, a very pretty girl who was in the first Pinafore Company that I went out with. That was the very beginning of my theatrical career. She thought a great deal of me, but I shall never see her again. I've just destroyed all her letters and those private ones that came this morning, too. I wouldn't have Dangerfield know anything about them for the world. He'd never let up on me. Dangerfield's an odd boy — says he never wrote a love letter in his life and never got one."

Winnifred nodded her head knowingly and slipped the letters quickly inside her jacket.

"Ahem! Ahem!!" followed by a slight cough.

The Colonel turned suddenly: "Ah, good morning, Miss Winnie," he cried, advancing with outstretched

hand: "So delighted to see you. You haven't forgotten me, then?"

"Forget you, Colonel Hix! I shall always remember the last words you said as you left me the morning that we parted at the Jersey City Ferry."

"Well, now, Miss Winnie, to be honest, I really have forgotten what I did say. I have to say so many nice things, you know."

"Shall I tell you what you did say, Colonel?" and she looked up, archly.

"Why, yes; it must be something pretty good for you to remember so long."

"It was — you said, Colonel — you said: Miss Winnie, I am greatly obliged for that little loan and I will pay you next week."

"Well, I'll keep my word! I'll keep my word! You shall have it!"

"What makes you think, Colonel, that the long deferred day of settlement will come so soon? I should hate to be disappointed again, you know. I had my return ticket — I always look out for that, you know — but the remainder of the company is resting at Troy."

The Colonel rubbed his hands together gleefully: "Oh, there will be no trouble about that, my dear young lady. It's my maxim to make defeat the stepping-stone to victory. I had hard luck out West with my Hibernian Minstrels, but Fortune favors the brave, and on the train from Chicago, I met a mine owner coming East to invest money. I tried to pump him to find out how much he was worth, and it is somewhere between one and ten millions. There is absolute surety that he will meet me here in New York and supply the backing for the most stupendous burlesque extravaganza that has ever been put upon the road."

"Anything to-day, Colonel?" and the familiar face of Mr. Sidney Steele looked in.

"No!" said the Colonel, sharply.

"All right; I'll call later."

Winnifred laughed: "Is that your backer, Colonel?"

"Miss Winnie, I'm not joking. I have a solid man on the string. We're going to sign contracts as soon as he arrives. My new company is going right out. Our mutual friend, Dangerfield, is going with me."

"Oh, where can I find Mr. Dangerfield?" the young lady broke in.

"He is staying in Eleventh Street, near Eighth Avenue, and lunching with his friends. His best friend just now is at the Criterion. You know where that is?"

"I will walk down that way and see if I can find him."

"No, you'd better wait," said the Colonel. "My young man, Dodd, you know —"

"No, I don't," said Winnifred.

"Oh, no, of course you don't. I sent him out to find Dangerfield and expect him here every minute. I want to see him as much as you do. Our numerous business affairs that we have in contemplation require a very protracted consultation. He was interested with me in my last venture, Hix's Histrionic Hibernian Minstrels—forty song and dance men—count them—they are all there."

"No, I can't stop," and the young lady started towards the door.

The Colonel followed her: "If you find him, send him up."

"I will when I get through talking to him."

"So do, and by the way, Miss Winton, I suppose if Dangerfield goes out with my new company, I can rely upon your valuable services?"

"I will give you a decided answer a week from to-day,

my dear Colonel, just after I give you your receipt," and, with a laugh, she departed.

"I shall have to raise the money, somehow, and pay her. She's the best one in her line on the stage to-day. There are very few lady comedians, but she's one of them. I'm afraid that everybody who saw my ad. saw that editorial, too. To a man in my position, the newspaper is his worst enemy, but when I get my backer, I'll make things solid with them. I have no use for editors or reporters. I fix things with the cashier."

At this point, Mr. Dodd rushed into the room, nearly out of breath, and exclaimed: "Jim says he'll send him up when he comes in."

"That all you could get out of Jim?" asked the Colonel.

"No, I got a drink."

The Colonel smacked his lips: "When a man wants anything, the best way is to go and get it himself."

At that moment there came a loud rap upon the office door, followed an instant later by two others, still more pronounced.

"Come in," cried the Colonel.

The door was opened slowly, and a man entered. The Colonel and Mr. Dodd surveyed the new arrival from head to foot, too much astonished to speak. The newcomer was evidently from the country. The texture and cut of his clothing attested that fact, as did his big shoes, which were well greased. His hat was a drab Kossuth. His skin had that dark brown, leathery look, which, comes from exposure to the summer sun, and his hands were large, brown, and bony. Upon his chin was the traditional goatee, which he pulled uneasily. Before speaking, he drew a large bandanna from his pocket and wiped the perspiration from his forehead:

"Does J. Orlando Hix live here?"

CHAPTER VII

"THE ANGEL"

THE gentleman from the country who was desirous of seeing Mr. J. O. Hix had refused to take the elevator and had toiled up six long flights of stairs. It was owing to this unusual exercise that the use of the bandanna became necessary, and while he was mopping his face, Dodd winked to the Colonel and said in an undertone :

"He's an angel."

"Get out!" said the Colonel, in a whisper. Mr. Dodd understood and did not resent the command.

"Ready, Colonel, for me to go to the bank?"

"No, Mr. Dodd, a little later. I expect some checks by the next mail and, Mr. Dodd, you'd better finish those contracts. Try to have them ready in half an hour."

"Certainly, Colonel, certainly."

As Mr. Dodd entered the private office, Colonel Hix advanced to greet the stranger, who still stood with his hand on the door knob.

"Walk in, sir. Take a seat."

The visitor accepted the invitation and placed his hat and umbrella on Mr. Dodd's desk. In doing so, he pushed off a number of papers, which fell upon the floor. In an instant, he was upon his hands and knees picking them up. As he arose to his feet, with some crumpled papers in each hand, he said :

"I'm kinder sorry. I'm a bit near-sighted. 'Sides, I ain't used to these new-fangled tables."

"Don't notice it, my dear sir," said the Colonel ; "not of the slightest consequence, I assure you."

"Guess I must be in the right place," and as he said

this he glanced at a letter which he held in his hand, "Room 729, Col. J. O. Hix. They have this room, don't they?"

The Colonel murmured to himself: "My future partner!" and then aloud: "That's my name, sir — Colonel Hix."

"Your'n? Oh, yes, city tricks — can't fool me. Man came up to Laconia last summer and set up a shoe shop. He called it Peter Great & Company. The last of the summer we all made up our minds that he was Great Peter, Peter Great and Company, boy, clerk, and all. Oh, well, city tricks is just as good for them as don't understand." As he said this he winked knowingly.

The Colonel said, decidedly: "That's my name, I assure you — Colonel J. Orlando Hix."

"Then, I suppose this letter's for you," and he handed it to the Colonel.

The Colonel looked at the superscription: "Ah! Introducing Mr. Leander Thoroughbrace. Dee-lighted! dee-lighted to see you, sir. Pray be seated."

"Well, I don't care if I do. Cheap sittin' as it is standin' — that is to say, I s'pose it is here. Cost me a dollar and seventy-five cents last night for a little narrer room, with a hole over the door instead of a winder. Never said a word about my stayin' to breakfast, nuther. I'm goin' home to-morrer, and I'm goin' to spend the night in a horse-car — cheapest place I've struck since I've been in New York."

The Colonel read the letter to himself:

"My dear Colonel: This will introduce to you my friend, Major Leander Thoroughbrace. He has learned your ad by heart. He's an angel. Wing him.

Yours confidentially,

DANGER."

"Is that all right?" asked Mr. Thoroughbrace. "A

young feller gave it to me. He said he was a particular friend of your'n. I saw your advertisement and that's how we got acquainted. I asked him where the Chinese Buildings was, and that kinder lead on to a conversation."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Dangerfield is one of my oldest and best friends. Anyone having an introduction from him I give my confidence. I am a regular confidence—no, not that. I am a naturally confiding man. Allow me to say again that I am happy to make your acquaintance. Were you in the war?"

"No — militia — when I was young. I was a great boy for training. Were you in the war, Colonel?"

"Yes, and two miles on the other side. I came near losing my last drop of terra cotta."

"You don't say so! You was hit?"

"Well, I should say so!"

"Where?"

"In the horse. Killed him so quick he never dropped." The Colonel said to himself: "He doesn't drop, either."

They had been sitting at Mr. Dodd's desk. The Colonel arose and pointed to the roll-top desk: "Major, my desk is over there. May I trouble you to change your position?"

When they were again seated the Colonel went on: "I suppose we might as well talk business now."

Rising suddenly, he pulled the string attached to the telephone:

"Hello! I say. Yes, 6666. Yes. What theatre? No, no — Wallack's. Hullo! Yes, is that you, Lester? What? All right! I'll send him down to-morrow. What's that? You don't say so! Yes. All right! Good-bye."

As the Colonel sat down, he repeated: "Now, sir, I suppose you are ready to talk business with me. Where did you see my ad?"

"I met him in Union Square and, as I told you before, I asked him where the Chinese Buildings was and I showed him the paper."

"Oh, I see. You met my friend Mr. Dangerfield in Union Square and showed him my ad. in the paper."

"The paper said you wanted a partner with five thousand dollars to invest in the show business. What's the snap?"

Colonel Hix remarked in a polite, but very dignified manner:

"It's no snap, but a *bona fide* business enterprise. To be sure, I did advertise for a moneyed partner, and this morning received not less than thirty answers." As he spoke he took out a package of letters: "Now, here are eight or ten letters that I received this morning from some of our most prominent business men, most of them old managers, but they are all lifelong friends of mine, and, you see, I can't accept one without offending the other."

Mr. Thoroughbrace started up from his chair: "Well, I had to come to New York anyway, and I thought it wouldn't be any time or money lost if I come in to see what it was," and putting on his hat and grasping his umbrella, he started toward the door. "Sorry to disturb you."

"Keep your seat, Major. Don't hurry, I beg of you. Excuse me a moment," he added, as in answer to a pull from the string, the telephone bell sounded again.

"Hullo! What? Colonel Hix. Don't you understand — Colonel Hix. Salvini — I suppose I could cable him. Oh, yes, I am willing to put up a guaranty. What? How much? Five thousand dollars. I will attend to that. Hullo! Will you give me half interest in the season for twenty thousand? I will think of it and let you know to-morrow: All right. Good-bye."

Mr. Thoroughbrace, who had stood hesitatingly on one

foot and then on the other, during the conversation at the telephone, was much impressed thereby, and resumed his seat.

The Colonel thought it best to change his tactics :
"Do you belong in New York State?"

"No, I was born in Dublin."

"Is that so?" cried the Colonel. "Well, I never should have thought it. I suppose you came over before the Home Rule troubles."

"Came over from where?" asked Mr. Thoroughbrace.

"Why, from the old country."

Mr. Thoroughbrace laughed heartily : "So you took me for an Irishman? Do I look like one?"

"Oh, no, not at all," replied the Colonel, "but your saying that you were born in Dublin —"

"Oh, that's all right, Colonel. I mean Dublin, New Hampshire."

"A very natural mistake of mine, Major. Now, would you believe it if I should tell you that I was born in Rome?"

"No, I should never have thought you were so far away from home as that."

"That's very good, Mr. Thoroughbrace, very good, indeed! But I was born in Rome — Rome, New York."

Colonel Hix was a resourceful man, and again he changed the subject: "In what kind of business did you make your fortune, Major? Are you actively engaged at present?"

"No, I ain't in business just now. I used to keep a hotel up in St. Albans, but they made such a fuss about our selling liquor that I had to sell out. A hotel without liquor is like a farm without squash. The owner soon gets seedy."

"Then you are just from St. Albans?" queried the Colonel.

"No, I ain't, nuther. I've kept a hotel in Laconia for the last five years. Sold it out at a good profit and, for the last week, I hain't been doin' nothin' but spendin' money."

"Ever been connected with the theatrical business?" was the Colonel's next question.

"S'pose you have done a good deal at it?" was the Yankee-like reply.

"Oh, certainly! Controlled at all times and under all circumstances most of the leading actors now before the American public." The Colonel smiled: "Did I understand you to say that you had had some experience in the theatrical business?"

"Oh, yes, company went to smash in our place and I set 'em up again and kept 'em on their feet for about four weeks."

"I never could keep actors on their feet as long as that," remarked the Colonel.

"Well, I did. I paid all the bills and wages and cleared forty dollars. Pretty good wasn't it?"

"Very good, indeed. Vanderbilt couldn't have done any better. Goes to show what you could do if properly handled."

Mr. Thoroughbrace resented this remark: "Give me a chance and I can do my own handling."

"Major, you don't understand me. I mean supposing you had fifty thousand dollars. Well, there wouldn't be any need of my having any money if you had that. Of course, we would divide equally at first, and if the expenses were greater than the receipts, why then you could put in more. You see all business is a mathematical problem. Now, I am a regular professor of mathematics. I can figure out the best end of any kind of a bargain."

Mr. Thoroughbrace ejaculated: "I guess they'd find it hard work to get ahead of us if we worked together, but if I put fifty thousand dollars in with you, I should want to do some of the figurin' myself."

"Why, of course," assented the Colonel. "I meant that we should figure together, and it would be your fault if we did not come out even."

"Well," remarked Mr. Thoroughbrace, "if we go in together, I'll bear that in mind."

The Colonel added: "Ah! certainly!"

But Mr. Thoroughbrace had not had his say: "I am a countryman in a white hat, but Parson Merrill, who runs the Church in Snickersville where I just come from—I've just sold a farm I owned there to Miss Harkins who's just lost her father—her mother died ten years ago—she's a mighty smart girl, too—well, as I was saying, Parson Merrill told me to look out for them bunco-men, and you can bet I've kept my eye teeth cut. Why, this morning I was lookin' at them cars that run up in the air, and a fellow came along and said: 'Where yer goin'?' and he told me that he was goin' that way and would be glad to show me. I just said: Well, you go right along and when I git ready I'll come arter yer. Last night I was wanderin' round town to see the sights, you know, and I seed three fellers kinder circlin' 'round and I made up my mind they was a bad lot. I came to a dark place in the street and all three on 'em got close up to me. What do you s'pose I did?"

"Well," said the Colonel, "I should imagine that a man with a muscle like yours would knock them down, one, two, three."

"Well, I didn't. I ain't no fighter. I just put my hand in my pocket and pulled out my old tin spectacle case, and then I just pointed it at one of the fellers and said:

Now you git, or I'll put a hole through you quicker'n lightin' — an' you ought to have seen them fellers scoot."

"You must have presented quite a military appearance," remarked the Colonel.

The telephone was again put in requisition: "Hullo! Yes. When do you want Madame Leo? I can send you a lady to sing for a hundred dollars and expenses. Suit you? I know she will. I will have the contracts drawn up. All right! Good-bye."

"I'm sorry I'm so busy for your sake, Major," apologized the Colonel, as he hung up the receiver. Then, opening the door of the private office, he said:

"Mr. Dodd, Mademoiselle Belladonna is wanted for the next Sunday Pop Concert. Telegraph her at Larchmont Manor. By the way, Eli, don't forget to order those hundred thousand hangers for Hix's Histrionic Hibernian Minstrels. Have you finished the Clara Vere de Vere contracts?"

"Yes, sir, they are all ready but the terms and dates," replied Mr. Dodd.

"Those will be ready very shortly, Mr. Dodd," said the Colonel, as he closed the door.

Turning again to Mr. Thoroughbrace, he began: "So you think you have a pretty thorough knowledge of the business, especially on the Eastern circuit?"

"Yes, pretty general, but I guess you have got so much business on hand and so many people to get into this, that, and the other, that you haven't got much chance for me. Guess I'd better buy a small hotel here where I can sell liquor. There's always money in that."

Mr. Thoroughbrace made another attempt to leave the room, but Colonel Hix was not disposed to lose so eligible and well-qualified a partner.

"Pray be seated, my dear boy. I want to put this thing

right on the road. Of course, I don't need the money, but I must have it immediately. I have a large floating capital myself, but even a hundred thousand dollars looks small when invested in as many schemes as I have on hand. Why, only last week I invested twenty thousand dollars belonging to a relative who intends to make me his heir. He can't live, so I took time by the forelock and invested his money. In this business, when one wants money he must have it. Provided we can agree on terms, did you come prepared to furnish the requisite amount?"

"Well, yes," said Mr. Thoroughbrace, "I thought I would be pretty likely to get into something and I might as well bring the money along. Nothin' like havin' the ready relief handy."

"Well, I have settled on no one yet, you know, Major, and besides most of these business men need a week or ten days to raise that amount, so as not to interfere with any of their other investments. Then, your knowledge of the business is worth more to me than simple money. But did you say you were ready to do business to-day, my dear Major?"

The Major answered in an independent manner: "Well, I can, if I see fit."

"Well, that saves time and trouble. Besides, none of these parties who have written, as I said before, ever had any experience in this business."

"I thought you said some of those letters were from old managers?"

"Oh, yes, of course," the Colonel explained; "they had small companies out, but they all went to smash. They were not Metropolitan managers."

"I thought you just said they never had any experience?"

The Colonel was in it deep, but he floundered out:

"They are anxious to be managers, but they never made any money in it. Don't you understand?"

"Oh, now I get your meanin'," said Mr. Thoroughbrace. "They didn't come out ahead, as I did."

"You've got it. They didn't have your business qualifications, my dear Major."

"Well, it does take a smart man to handle a show."

"I should say so. I wouldn't offer everyone this opportunity. You can see, Leander, there's no possible chance to lose a cent. As I explained to you, my money is all tied up at present. If it were not, I wouldn't entertain the thought of a partner for a moment, because, you see, my dear boy, a partner can go right along and draw all his money out the first day. Don't you understand?"

"What, five thousand dollars in one day?" ejaculated Mr. Thoroughbrace, and he drew out his bandanna again.

"Well, not quite five thousand, but near it—only a cipher or two less. It will quite surprise you when you see how much you can get back from it."

A voice was heard outside singing a popular air.

"Ah!" cried the Colonel, "here comes Mr. Olney Dangerfield, the great comedian. He's a splendid fellow, and just as funny off the stage as he is on."

CHAPTER VIII

A GREAT COMEDIAN

MR. LEANDER THOROUGHBRACE fixed his gaze on the office door : " That's your ad. coming."

" My ad ? " said the Colonel. " What do you mean ? "

" Why, ain't this the feller I met on Union Square, and that sent me up here ? "

" Oh, I understand," said the Colonel.

" I thought you'd catch on," said Mr. Thoroughbrace.

" And you'll catch on, too," said Colonel Hix to himself.

" I'll land you."

At that moment the door was thrown wide open, and a fine looking young fellow, fully six feet tall, and developed in proportion, came briskly into the room.

The Colonel advanced quickly to meet him :

" Ah, Dangerfield, my dear boy, glad to see you. It is to you that I am indebted for an introduction to my new friend here, and future partner, Mr. Leander Thoroughbrace."

Mr. Dangerfield removed his Derby, and nodded to Mr. Thoroughbrace, accompanying the act with the words : " Your most obedient."

Colonel Hix struck an attitude and pointed with the forefinger of his right hand to Mr. Dangerfield, who, during the personal remarks which followed, did not blush, but stood the ordeal unmoved.

" There stands a man," said the Colonel, " whose name, Olney Dangerfield, is on the lips of every lover of the drama, in this country. There's money in him, Mr. Thoroughbrace ; there's money in him."

" Gentlemen, there's considerable in a name when you

once get it before the public," said Mr. Dangerfield, nonchalantly. "I don't think I could have galvanized my own name into such prominence. If I had stuck to it, the old man's business would have stuck to me, and I'd have been tending a country store now. Don't you think so, Colonel?"

The Colonel ejaculated: "What?" As he spoke he laid his finger warningly on Mr. Dangerfield's shoulder.

The young man took the hint and answered lightly: "Oh, nothing, you know I like my little joke."

The Colonel glanced at Mr. Thoroughbrace, who had arisen from his seat and was regarding, attentively, a huge poster which represented a *danseuse* pirouetting on one toe.

The Colonel whispered to Mr. Dangerfield: "There's a good old saying — don't joke before strangers; they may think it's the truth."

"Oh, I'll be careful," said Mr. Dangerfield. "I'll not give myself away."

"By Thunder!" exclaimed Thoroughbrace, "I don't see how she does it. She must have an iron toe. Shouldn't like to have her kick me."

"I never saw one who wasn't a kicker," remarked Mr. Dangerfield. "You'd better keep away from them, Major."

"You told me you was a friend of his," said Mr. Thoroughbrace to Olney, at the same time pointing to the Colonel.

"I am not the only one, Mr. Thoroughbrace, only one of a thousand. I suppose you found him very busy."

"Well," remarked Mr. Thoroughbrace, shaking his head, "I should not want his load on my shoulders."

Mr. Dangerfield said to himself: "Nor I." Then to Thoroughbrace: "Oh, he's good for it, Major. Eh, Hixie,

old boy?" and he gave the Colonel a punch in the ribs which made him gasp for breath.

The Colonel retreated behind his desk to recover his equanimity. When he had done so, he remarked: "It is trying on the nerves, but my weight keeps them down." Then he gave the telephone string a quick jerk.

As the Colonel took down the receiver, he winked at Dangerfield, who raised his eyebrows in reply.

"*Herald* office? How much? Make it three columns, if you please. It's a new play and it needs it. Who's there, did you say — Nickerson? Hello, Jack. Can't do it — sorry. I've got all I can swing. Why don't you see Robertson? He told me he was open for something — perhaps you can fall in. Good-bye."

As he hung up the receiver, he turned to Thoroughbrace: "One of my brother managers wanted me to go in halves with him on building a new theatre; but, of course, after going so far as I have with you —"

This gave Mr. Dangerfield an opportunity: "Hix, my boy, I bet you're the only man in New York who can control three columns of the *Herald*."

Olney threw himself into one of the easy-chairs and yawned: "Say, Hixie, my dear boy, I feel rather old this morning. I was out to dinner last night! Oh, such a layout! Everything you could imagine. I went clear through the menu, helped empty eight bottles of Pomery Fizz, and ate two plates of tutti-frutti."

Mr. Thoroughbrace had kept his eye on Mr. Dangerfield, puckering his lips and pulling, continually, at his goatee.

"Tooty-frooty!" he exclaimed. "New mess, ain't it?"

Mr. Dangerfield contemplated him, resting one cheek upon his hand: "Have you never had an audience with that dish yet? Why, I'm astonished!"

Mr. Thoroughbrace sniffed: "Can't say that I have—

my wife's a great cook, though. There ain't a woman in Snickersville, New Hampshire — that's where I come from — that can hold a candle to her at fryin' doughnuts. An' I'm ready to put up money on it, too."

"Well," remarked Mr. Dangerfield, "I would advise you to get acquainted with tutti-frutti. If your wife can fry doughnuts, she can make that—it's much easier."

Mr. Thoroughbrace was placated.

Mr. Dangerfield went on: "I was at dinner once with Mr. Horace Greeley, who was the editor of the *Tribune*. The waiter brought on some tutti-frutti. It was very cold — I mean the tutti-frutti, not the weather."

"Anything like freeze puddin'?" asked Mr. Thoroughbrace. "I've tackled that."

"Very similar," replied Mr. Dangerfield, "but quite different. What's that?" asked Mr. Greeley. Tutti-frutti, said the waiter. If you will take it out and warm it, I'll eat some, said the great editor.

"Greeley and I were very chummy. We used to go to the theatre together. One night when the Black Crook was on, the aisles were full of standers and Horace could not see a thing and that's what he was there for. He tapped the man who stood in front of him on the shoulder and said, quietly: If you see anything interesting on the stage, will you kindly tell me about it? I paid more than you did to come in, but, unfortunately, I bought a seat. Horace was quite a wag — something like you, Colonel. But I've imposed upon you too long. You have business to attend to. I'll come in later," and he yawned again.

But Colonel Hix did not wish Mr. Dangerfield to go. He remembered the old proverb that "two heads are better than one," and felt it was possible, even probable, at some point in the negotiations, that Mr. Dangerfield's assistance might be of great value. He pushed that

young gentleman back into his easy-chair, in a friendly way, of course, and cried :

"No, no, my dear boy, sit down. Seen the paper?"

Dangerfield looked at the paper for an instant, then asked, suddenly: "What year was Fort Sumter fired on?"

"'62," said the Colonel, quickly.

"No, siree, cried Mr. Thoroughbrace, "'61. I didn't go to war myself — I was too young — but I read all about it, and I can tell you the whole story."

"No need of that," said Mr. Dangerfield. "I'll excuse you — you've so much talking to do with my friend, the Colonel, here; besides, there is a full account of the whole affair in this paper. I am surprised at you, Colonel; you seldom have anything to do with back numbers."

As Colonel Hix passed the morning paper to Mr. Dangerfield, he whispered: "Don't guy him too much; he's no fool."

Dangerfield could not keep back a reply, and every word he said was audible to Mr. Thoroughbrace. "But he'll be one before you get through with him."

"What's that?" cried Mr. Thoroughbrace, surmising that the conversation referred to him.

"I was just remarking to the Colonel," said Mr. Dangerfield, "that some men are very fortunate and drop into a good thing without knowing it, and that if you went into business with him, it wouldn't be long before you'd be rolling in wealth, and your wife would wear diamonds."

"Well, Abby is a good lookin' woman, if she is my wife, and if she wants to wear diamonds, she can have them."

Colonel Hix took a cigar from his pocket: "Sorry I haven't but one, Olney."

"One's enough," said Mr. Dangerfield. "I'll smoke

it and read the paper, while you are talking to the Major."

He took his position by the window, and was, apparently, deeply engrossed with the newspaper, but his quick ear caught every word.

"Take one of these easy-chairs, Mr. Thoroughbrace," said the Colonel, "and I'll draw up another one *tete-a-tete*, as my friends the French say."

When they were seated, the Colonel began the attack: "Well, Thoroughbrace, my dear boy, this business of ours must be put right through. Although our acquaintance has been short, I think I have found in you a sharp, shrewd, business man, and as you are ready to put up, I will accept your offer. You can go right along with the company, and—handle all your own money and mine too! So there's no chance for you to lose a cent. Do you think there is, Dangerfield, old boy?"

Dangerfield turned: "What's that?" Lose money travelling?"

"Yes, on the road," the Colonel explained.

Mr. Dangerfield resumed the reading of his paper, saying as he did so: "Never heard of a case where anyone ever lost any."

"Well, not under my management," remarked Colonel Hix.

"Nor mine, either," said Mr. Thoroughbrace.

He slid down in his chair, dug his heels into the Brussels carpet, to preserve his equilibrium, and feeling that it was assured, threw one leg over the other and plucked his goatee, nervously.

The Colonel saw that the time had arrived to clinch matters:

"I was so sure that I should strike some reliable party, that I had the contracts drawn up yesterday. I left the names and dates blank. Mr. Dodd! Mr. Dodd!!"

Mr. Dodd appeared at the door of the private office.

"Those partnership contracts, please, Mr. Dodd."

The Colonel joined Mr. Dangerfield at the window.

"I want you," said the Colonel, sententiously.

"Will he work?" asked Dangerfield. "Is he an angel?"

"Yes, he's solid. Wallet like a Saratoga trunk. Got it with him, too."

"How much can I strike him for?" asked the comedian.

At that moment Mr. Dodd entered with the contracts. The Colonel grasped them, and handed one to Mr. Thoroughbrace.

"Now, Major, just run that over. I don't think there is anything in there you can object to, but if there is, you can sign provisionally and pay your money; then, if not satisfactory, you can make such changes in your copy as will suit you, and I'll let mine stand so as not to conflict with yours. Don't you understand?"

While Mr. Thoroughbrace was examining the contract, Colonel Hix went to his own desk, where Mr. Dangerfield joined him.

"I'm waiting for my answer."

"Oh, yes," said the Colonel. "I'd put it at a hundred and seventy-five a week; or rather, strike me for that before him."

"All right, and I'll visit him for a slight advance besides. I want a new suit."

"All right, but go easy," said the Colonel. "He might get frightened and fly away."

They approached Mr. Thoroughbrace, who looked up from the document he had been reading carefully.

"I have been trying to induce our friend Dangerfield to renounce his New York engagement and go with us." The Colonel pointed to the contract: "How does that strike you, Major?"

"Well, I can't make out the writing very well, but I see your name comes in pretty often."

"Oh, that's easily explained. When we drew them up we didn't know what your name was. If there's anything the matter with it after the money's paid, I should be willing to make any change you want in them. Don't you understand?"

Mr. Thoroughbrace nodded: "I guess I do. You make your own side of it pretty plain."

"Now," said the Colonel, "all we got to do is to sign, seal, and deliver, in the presence of witnesses, and the job is done — after the money is paid. Mr. Dodd! Mr. Dodd!! Now we are all ready, gentlemen. Mr. Dodd will act as my witness. Mr. Dangerfield, being an outside party, will represent you, Mr. Thoroughbrace."

The documents were duly signed and witnessed. Mr. Thoroughbrace next took from an inside pocket of his coat, a huge leather wallet, which he slowly unstrapped. He counted out eight five hundred dollar bills, fresh from the bank, and made up the balance with those of smaller denominations. The eager eyes of his companions saw that the wallet, though somewhat depleted, was still well filled.

Through the Colonel's mind ran the thought: "If we get short, there's more to come."

Mr. Dangerfield said to himself: "I think I'll ask him for two hundred."

Mr. Dodd went into the private office, closed the door, struck a histrionic attitude, and exclaimed:

"At last my dream is to be realized. I am to be an actor, and in my innermost soul I feel — I shall be a great one."

While the Colonel was counting the money — he did not lift up the bill when he had counted five thousand, for he

had a faint hope that there might be another one under it—the familiar face of Mr. Steele was thrust in, and his well-known voice uttered the expected words:

“Anything today, Colonel?”

“Nothing this time of the day, but—”

Mr. Steele took in the situation. “All right! I’ll be sure to call later,” and as he went down on the elevator, he mentally figured up the interest due on his three dollars back salary.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW PARTNER

"MAJOR," said the Colonel, as he handed the signed contract to him, "that's the best day's work you ever did."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it. Now I s'pose I'm one of yer."

"Yes," cried Mr. Dangerfield, "you're one of us! Shake!"

If he had intended to give the Major a grip which he would remember, the tables were turned upon him, for when Mr. Thoroughbrace's large, bony hand closed over his, he felt as though he had been caught in a vice, and struggled to free himself.

"I don't sign papers very often," said Mr. Thoroughbrace, "but when I shake hands with a man to bind a bargain it means something."

Mr. Dangerfield looked at the reddened hand which had been embraced, and remarked: "I should think it took the place of a seal with you."

The Colonel turned to Mr. Dodd: "Run down to the *Scandal* office, Eli, and discontinue that ad."

"Why don't you telephone?" asked the Major.

"Why, don't you understand, no one is allowed to telephone the newspaper unless he works for them. They ring me up a dozen times a day on business, but I always send my communications by a messenger."

As Mr. Dodd started to go out, the Colonel cried: "Here, Dodd, stop the paper, too. I'll get even with them yet." Then he turned quickly to Mr. Dangerfield, and said:

"Danger, my boy, what do you say to my proposition — or, I should say, our proposition?"

"I have been thinking it over," said Mr. Dangerfield. "It is impossible. What would my manager say?"

"Well, supposing we make it an object to you?"

He leaned over and whispered to Thoroughbrace: "We must have him in our company, if money will get him."

Mr. Dangerfield took his cue: "But I have just signed a contract for eight months at a hundred and fifty dollars a week and expenses."

"Well, throw him over and come with me," said the Colonel, "or rather"—and he bowed to the Major—"that is to say—with us. We'll give you one hundred and seventy-five dollars a week."

"What!" cried Mr. Thoroughbrace. "A hundred and seventy-five dollars a week? Mighty few folks up our way gets more'n that in a year."

"My dear fellow, we must pay for talent!" exclaimed the Colonel. "Is it a go, Danger?"

Mr. Dangerfield slapped Colonel Hix on the back: "Well, Hixie, old boy, there's no getting away from you. I suppose I must humor you. Yes, I will break with the other party, but, see here, I must have a hundred dollars immediately to telegraph to San Francisco for a substitute to take my place. Of course, I'll have to pay his fare on."

"Certainly, my dear boy. I'll give it to you with pleasure—that is—we will."

The Colonel bowed again to Mr. Thoroughbrace, whose hand went unconsciously in the direction of his wallet.

"Just let me have a hundred on account, will you, Leander?"

"Why don't you take it out of the money you've got?"

"Impossible, my dear Major. That's the capital. It would never do to deplete the capital by paying it out for running expenses. Don't you understand?"



THE NEW PARTNER



Mr. Thoroughbrace scratched his head : " Can't say that I do exactly."

" Well, I'll make it plain to you, Major. If it was my own money I wouldn't hesitate to let him have it. Ain't that satisfactory, Major ? "

The Major sighed as he drew his wallet from his pocket. He opened it and, after thumbing the bills for some time, slowly drew out one for a hundred dollars, which the Colonel instantly grasped, then started towards his desk, closely followed by Mr. Dangerfield.

" I'll hold this for you," said the Colonel.

" Who will hold you ? " asked Mr. Dangerfield, and he extended his hand for the money, which the Colonel reluctantly gave him. " Thank you, Colonel, and look here, Major, if I get into trouble from breaking my contract with the other manager, I shall look to you for succor."

" That's all right, Danger. You'll find the Major there every time," said the Colonel, turning his head to conceal a grin.

Colonel Hix followed Mr. Dangerfield to the door : " Look here, Danger, understand your salary to me is just the same as last season, twenty-five dollars a week." This was said in an undertone.

" And expenses ? "

" Certainly not. Haven't you just got a hundred dollars ? "

" Well, Colonel, we'll settle that when we get on the road. I'll drop into Frohman's office and write a few letters."

" Letters ! " cried the Colonel, and he surveyed the top of his desk. " I forgot to give you the two letters which came for you this morning."

" Another postal fraud," murmured Mr. Dangerfield.

The thought came to the Colonel : " Wonder if I tore them up with those duns."

The Colonel and Mr. Dangerfield regarded each other and then looked inquiringly at the Major. The Major comprehended : " I ain't seed 'em. Money in 'em?"

" Yes," said Mr. Dangerfield ; " returns from some of my investments. You see, I don't usually act for money. What I want is fame."

" You don't act for money, eh?" said the Major. " What are we goin' to give ye a hundred and seventy-five dollars a week for, then?"

The Colonel came to the rescue : " For the use of his name, my dear Major. He is a great card. Nowadays, an actor's name is the best thing there is about him."

Mr. Dangerfield stood in the open doorway. He lifted his right hand and exclaimed : " My word is pledged and I will not withdraw my affidavit. I will see you in an hour."

CHAPTER X

THE MANAGER'S LADY LOVE

COLONEL HIX gave Mr. Thoroughbrace a hearty slap on the shoulder: "We've got a prize in that chap, Leander. He's the only man in the country who can do the heavy villain business as I think it ought to be done. Why, do you know, Major, a manager telephoned me since you have been here, and offered Dangerfield three hundred dollars a week, with palace hotels and Pullman cars thrown in. Of course, I didn't say anything to him about it. I never would aid a friend if it injured my partner. Don't you understand?"

Mr. Thoroughbrace returned the friendly tap in the shape of a blow between the shoulders, which almost staggered the Colonel. At the same time the genial Major remarked: "I guess you're solid."

Catching his breath, the Colonel replied: "Bedrock, Major, every time."

Mr. Thoroughbrace approached the telephone and regarded it attentively. Pointing at it, he remarked: "That don't seem to be doing much lately."

"Oh — ah — no, I always shut it off when business is lively. I can't be disturbed, you know. You'll see all sorts of people in here presently about engagements. Not an actor that went out with me but what trusted me. There isn't a day but what they call in here to see if I can't do something for them."

Mr. Thoroughbrace was more interested in the telephone than he was in the Colonel's remarks.

"I would like to talk into one of them things. I never did in my life. My wife, Abby, is up in Snickersville,

New Hampshire. Can't you wind it up so that I can tell her I'm all right?"

"Not now, Major. I might as well be honest with you. A great friend of mine, Bandervilt — you've probably heard of him — does a great deal of business with the Stock Exchange between eleven and twelve, and, for friendship's sake, I let him use my private wire."

"Well, I'll wait until he gits through," said Mr. Thoroughbrace. "I'm bound to tell the folks to hum that I've talked into one of them."

"All right," said the Colonel. "I can do better for you. I am well acquainted with Bell, the man that got them up, and I'll buy you a little one to take home with you — when you go."

"Much obleeged," said the Major. "You theatre fellers seem to be posted on most everything and know most everybody."

"We have to be. Why, I never met a manager or an actor that didn't know the whole business. You may think I am extravagant in my remarks, but I would rather be a theatrical manager and live on boarding-house pie, than be a millionaire and have the feasts of Lucullus at my command."

"So that feller Luke's a pretty good liver?"

"He had a great liking for humming birds' tongues — took a hundred to make a mouthful."

Mr. Thoroughbrace ejaculated: "'Bout as bad as eating beech nuts."

The Colonel went on: "He was very fond of a stew made out of lamprey eels."

"Must like 'em better'n I do. Ours are kinder muddy."

"He used to finish up with *pate-de-foie gras* and real mock turtle soup."

The Major felt a little piqued: "I'm some on eatin' myself. Kind o' particular, too. You remember what I told you about Abby's doughnuts."

"You must go to dinner with me to-day, Major. They have the best outlay in the City at the Hotel Dam. They have Boston baked beans there, but I don't think there is anybody in New York who knows how to make doughnuts."

"What!" cried Mr. Thoroughbrace. "Hotel what? Guess there don't many deacons go there. Who runs it?"

"Who run's it?" the Colonel repeated. "Dam — good fellow, too."

"I would like to get acquainted with one of them hotel fellers," commented the Major. "Maybe it would be of use to me when I make my pile. I'm goin' to start another hotel up in Laconia, but I must sell liquor. The fellers that go up there in the summer are pretty dry."

"Well, now, Major, I must go down to the Trust Company and bank this money."

When he returned from the private office, he said: "Major, you are a full partner now and I leave you in charge of the establishment. If any one comes in, say I'll be back right away, but don't let anyone go out until they see me. If they insist upon going, go right along with them, follow them up, and bring them back. There's so much competition now, we cannot afford to lose a client — not on account of the money, of course — you know we've got plenty of that — but to keep up the reputation of the firm. If we don't get them, some other manager will. Don't you understand?"

Mr. Thoroughbrace sat down in Mr. Dodd's revolving chair, first drawing up one of the easy-chairs, in which he deposited both his well-greased boots. Leaning back he surveyed the apartment.

"All right," he said, as the Colonel went out, "I'll stick to 'em. I kinder think I shall like this business. New York's the place to invest money. Even if he is my partner, I'm not goin' to let on to Colonel Hix that this money ain't mine. No reason that he should know that the father of Uriel Gray left him seventy-five hundred dollars, and I was appointed executor of the estate with a roving commission to hunt 'round for that boy and tell him there's a fortune been left him. Who knows but what I may run across him here in New York? That's the last place he hailed from. Dunno's I'd know him. I ain't seed him since he was a little chap. I expect to be a long time findin' him, and if I can invest that money and make a cool fifty or a hundred thousand dollars, I shall be pretty well fixed. There will be something for Leander, and the boy won't suffer — not a cent's worth. Besides, I've got a personal reason for wantin' to find him. His folks moved down to Snickersville from Laconia when he was a youngster. I heerd that when he left home, about five years ago, he'd been sidlin' up to a Renwick girl, named Mary Cramer. They say he treated her kinder mean — hasn't written her a word since he went away. Been busy, I s'pose. But if I can find Uriel and patch things up between 'em, it'll be good for Leander. The folks poked fun at Mary 'cause Uriel jilted her, and they say she got mad and went down to Boston and got a job there."

Mr. Thoroughbrace arose and carefully inspected every article in the room. When he came to the telephone, he espied the string and pulled it violently. The bell rang out sharply. Mr. Thoroughbrace put his ear to the transmitter and listened — but there was no response.

"I guess that Stock Exchange feller ain't through with it yet."

He then approached the door to the private office: "Wonder what's in this 'ere side room. If me and Hix is partners, of course I've got a right to look over the whole establishment — that's what he called it."

He looked at his watch and then at the telephone. "He ought to be through with that thing by this time. I'll give him ten minutes more. I'm a full partner, and Hix has got to give me all the points. He might drop off sudden and the business would go to thunder if I don't get a grip on it."

As Mr. Thoroughbrace entered the private office, Mr. Dodd returned. He evidently had something on his mind:

"Shall I assist Colonel Hix in his nefarious scheme to rob this innocent countryman of his hard-earned savings, or shall I disclose the whole plot and take a stand as an honest man? No, that would never do. My ambition is to be a manager one day, myself. Colonel Hix will go through the countryman's money, and I think I can make the most by sticking to the Colonel for the present."

"Hullo!" cried Mr. Thoroughbrace, as he re-entered the room. "Got back from the *Herald* office?"

"Yes, I ran both ways. We're pretty busy this morning. Got thirty or forty letters to write to managers."

"Well, you just push 'em along as fast as you can, Dodd, and if you can't manage 'em — me and Hix are full partners now — we'll git another feller."

"Old fool!" said Dodd to himself.

"To kinder help you out," concluded Mr. Thoroughbrace.

Mr. Dodd felt that his mental remark had been misplaced and, with a hearty "All right, Major," he went into the private office to attend to his multitudinous duties.

The Major pondered: "Perhaps he's got a lot of receipts to write out. I'll go in and help him."

As Colonel Hix had told Mr. Thoroughbrace, people were continually coming in. This time it was a young lady, elegantly dressed. She did not have dark hair and roughish brown eyes like those of Miss Winton. Her eyes were blue, and her hair of that peculiar flaxen color to which the sun's rays gave a golden tinge. She was somewhat fatigued and, as she sat down in one of the easy-chairs, gave one of those sighs of relief so common with tired people when they reach a haven of comfort.

"I have found James Orlando once more. It is his wish that I should call him Orlando, but how could I when my own name was plain Mary Jones? To my girlish heart, between Orlando and Molly there was an impassable gulf, but between James Orlando Hix and Rosa Cholmondeley, a leading actress and prospective heiress, the distance is not so great as it once was. Now I shall call him by no other name than Orlando. How will he greet me? Does he still love me, or have his affections wandered?"

Mr. Thoroughbrace, finding that his services were not needed, returned to the main office and was confronted by Miss Cholmondeley.

"Good morning, ma'am," he said; "do you wish to see me or Hix?"

"Do you mean Colonel James Orlando Hix?" asked the young lady.

"Yes, that's the whole of him, but I'm busy, an' so I call him plain Hix."

"He's not plain Hix — at least, not to me. He is my Orlando, my future partner."

Mr. Dodd, hearing voices, looked into the room.

"Hix's partner!" exclaimed Mr. Thoroughbrace. "How much money are you goin' to put in?"

"My fortune will be at my husband's disposal."

"You don't say so!" cried the Major. "Is Hix goin' to marry you?"

"Certainly! Do you doubt it?" and there was a dignified tone in her voice.

"Course I don't," said the Major. "If I warn't a married man —"

The young lady interrupted him: "I have eighty-one letters from him. Here they are. In seventy-eight of them he calls me his — well, he couldn't have said anything sweeter. The other three are telegrams which Orlando sent me when he was away from the company on business."

"Well, I guess if you have all them letters, you have him tied to rights. Are you an actress? Are you lookin' for a job?"

The lady smiled: "I am the best of all the Josephines — see card in dramatic papers."

"You don't say! Who was she?"

"Don't you know what a Josephine is? Have you never seen one?"

"If I did, I didn't know her — not until to-day," and the Major looked admiringly at Rosa.

But the lady's mind was on her absent lover: "Oh, where is Orlando? I hope nothing has happened to him. If you are his partner, why don't you know where he is?"

"You seem to be in considerable of a hurry, ma'am. I should think you had a marriage license in your pocket, and the minister waitin' for you in a carriage."

Rosa humored him: "I have — and the license will soon be exchanged for a marriage certificate. I shall serve a writ of matrimonial *habeas corpus* upon him as soon as I see him."

She changed her manner abruptly: "Oh, sir, were you ever in love?"

"Well, I guess! When I was a youngster, I had more'n forty different girls. I took 'em out ridin', summer and winter, and we went to huskin' bees, and barn raisin's, and barbecues, and spellin' bees, and hops, and such like amusements — I forgot the circuses — but I finally settled on Abby Mills as bein' the likeliest one on 'em, and we got hitched. Do you like doughnuts? As I told the Colonel, there ain't a woman in our parts that can beat Abby on makin' 'em."

"I don't care for cake," Miss Rosa replied, "but I am passionately fond of frozen pudding."

The Major gave a loud guffaw. Miss Cholmondeley was astonished :

"Was there anything particularly funny in my remark?"

"No, not what you said, ma'am, but the Colonel told me a story about a man named Greeley who liked that kind of puddin' that you do, but he wouldn't eat it until they warmed it" — and the Major had another hearty laugh.

"I don't like stories of any kind," Rosa replied. "I can think only of love and happiness — the happiness which comes from a happy marriage. Where is Orlando?" In an instant her hand was on the handle of the office door.

"Come back! Come back!" cried Mr. Thoroughbrace. "He'll be here soon. He said he would come right back."

"I will not wait. I cannot be separated from him any longer."

As she left the room, the Major looked disturbed. Then the Colonel's admonition rang in his ears and, grasping his hat and umbrella, he rushed after her.

"She's a beautiful woman," remarked Mr. Dodd, who had seen much and heard all, as he closed the door of the private office and went back to his work.

CHAPTER XI

AN ALL 'ROUND ACTRESS

BUT a few minutes had elapsed after Mr. Thoroughbrace's sudden departure before the office door was opened and again admitted the young lady with the laughing brown eyes — Miss Winnifred Winton.

"Colonel Hix told me there was an angel in here. I wonder if he was the one that flew by me as I came upstairs. The Colonel said he'd got a backer for his new piece. He told me Olney was going out with him and offered me an engagement. It would be delightful to be in the same company with Olney. Colonel Hix said his angel was keeping the office, but for me to go right up; but the Colonel's compliment did not make me forget that little loan."

A sound, made by a pair of heavy boots, was heard, and Winnifred exclaimed: "He's coming!"

Her premonition was correct, for the office door was thrown violently open and Mr. Thoroughbrace rushed in with arms extended, holding his hat in one hand and his umbrella in the other.

"Whew! she's the fastest skipper I've seen here in New York. Don't make much difference! She'll come back! Couldn't keep her away."

He had not observed Winnifred and she thought it was time to present herself: "Is Colonel Hix in, or his partner?"

Mr. Thoroughbrace said mentally: "The news must have got around town pretty quick." He placed his hat upon his head, then removed it, and bowing to Winnifred, said: "I am the gentleman."

"Which one?" asked Winnifred. "Is it possible that I am addressing the celebrated theatrical manager, Colonel Hix?"

"Well, not exactly," said Mr. Thoroughbrace, "but the next thing to it. I'm Major Leander Thoroughbrace, of Snickersville, New Hampshire, and Colonel Hix's partner. The firm is now Hix and Thoroughbrace."

"Well, Colonel Hix needed both a brace and a backer, and I am happy to learn that he has found them in you, Major. But what place was that you said you came from — Smickersville? How did it come by such a funny name?"

"No! Snickersville," said the Major. "As to how it came by its name, I should not have known if Caleb Leeds — he's the oldest man in the town, nigh on to a hundred — hadn't told me. You see, the fust man that settled in the town was a French-Canuck, named L'Hom-medieu — man of God, they say it means, but from what I've heerd I guess old Anthony didn't live up to his name. Well, by-and-by, more folks settled down 'round him and it got to be quite a village, and the folks thought it ought to have a name, so they called a meetin' and the subject come up. A good many on 'em thought it ought to be called for old Anthony — they allus called him Lummydoo — but some on 'em thought Lummydoo wasn't quite the thing for a town name and they didn't like the idea of bein' called Lummydooians. Well, there's more to the story and I guess I'll have to tell that fust. Yer see, old Anthony was a great joker and he liked to tell stories, and he jest laffed, and laffed, and laffed till he weighed most three hundred, and all the folks in the town they laffed, and laffed, and laffed, and they all got fat, too. There was one feller at the meetin' and he says: Why not call it Snickersville? Old Anthony has snickered ever since

he started the town and we've snickered ever since we've been here, and, p'rhaps more for fun than anything else, they voted to call the town Snickersville, and nobody has thought of changin' it ever since."

"That's a very interesting story, Mr. Thoroughbrace, but you can't have lived there very long, for you haven't grown very fat."

"Oh, no, I have lived most o' the time up in Laconia. I had a hotel up there, but they shut down on liquor and that busted me. Then I bought a farm down in Snickersville, 'cause my wife was a country girl and was born there and she ain't satisfied 'less she can be where there's cows, and horses, and hens, and she says new-mown hay smells better'n anything else she knows of."

"It makes a very fine perfume," said Winnifred.

"Well," said the Major, "I have served so much whiskey over the bar that I got more used to the smell of that than anything else, but I never drink any myself. But you've got the advantage of me, Miss. Here I've been tellin' you who I am, what I am, and where I come from, and I don't know who you are."

"I am Miss Winnifred Winton. Perhaps I ought to explain that that is not my real name."

"What!" exclaimed the Major, "do folks in New York have two names? I thought it was only folks that was afraid of the police that had more'n one name."

"Oh, no, you are mistaken," said Miss Winnifred. "Very few actresses use their own name on the stage. There is a romance connected with my real name, and as you have told me your story, I will tell you mine. My father and mother—they are both dead—were actors. They had a sincere admiration for a certain French actress whose genius is great and whose fame is world-wide. They named me after her. When I went upon the stage, I

could have taken no grander name than hers, but I did not think I had a right to attract public attention, and perhaps favor, by using her name, although it formed part of my own. So, when I went upon the stage, I discarded my real name of Sarah Bernhardt Brown and took that of Winnifred Winton."

"That's a very pretty name," said Mr. Thoroughbrace. "I used to know a girl named Winnifred up in Laconia, but soon after they was married her husband took to drink —"

"One of your customers?" interjected Miss Winton.

"Oh, no," was the reply; "that was before I went into the hotel business. They moved somewhere else and I lost sight of 'em. And so you are an actress?"

"Do I look like one?" asked Winnifred.

There was a broad smile on the Major's face as he regarded her.

"I suppose silence means consent," said Winnifred. "The very moment I laid eyes on you, Mr. Thoroughbrace, I knew you were a theatrical manager. I hope you are like Colonel Hix."

"Oh, yes, I like him fust rate. Shouldn't have taken him as my partner if I didn't think he was a good business manager."

"Of course," said Winnie. "I meant — resemble him."

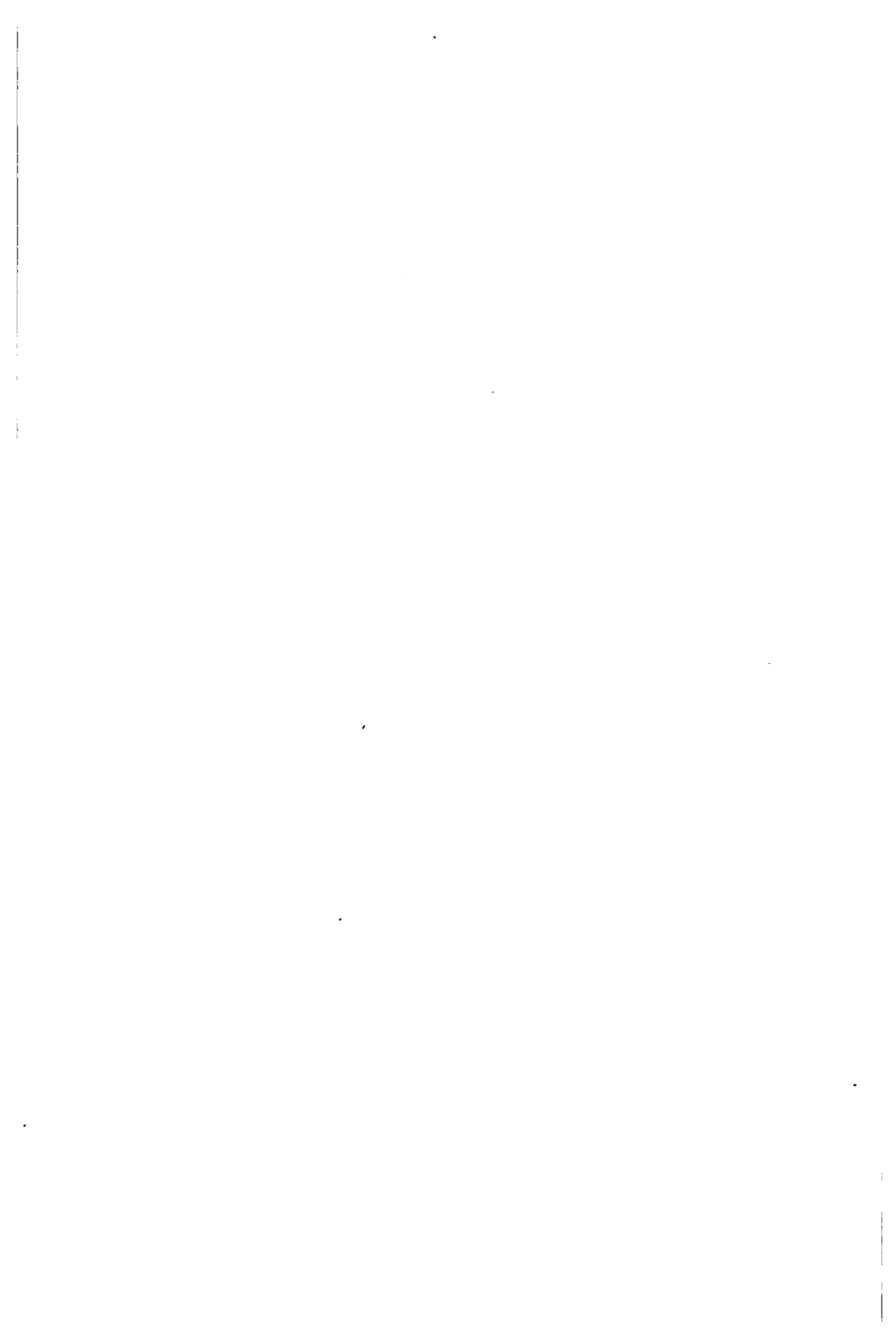
The Major felt of his nose: "Well, noses may be something alike." Then he felt of his ears: "My ears are a little longer, I guess."

"No doubt about that," thought Winnifred. Then aloud she said: "I mean in a business way, Mr. Thoroughbrace. The Colonel has always been very kind to debutantes."

The Major looked at her inquiringly: "What's them?"



SARAH BERNHARDT BROWN



"I mean young ladies just entering theatrical life. I first trod the boards through the managerial kindness of Colonel Hix. Since that time I have acted continuously and have studied very hard to gain a prominent place in my profession. Colonel Hix has often expressed his appreciation of my professional services."

"What Hix likes, I like. We're full partners. You've got along pretty well, haven't yer?"

"Oh, yes," said Winnifred. "I am now qualified to become a star. All I need is a very expensive wardrobe and a very wealthy backer."

Mr. Thoroughbrace was strangely attracted by the bright eyes and piquant manner of his companion:

"I'd like to see you act. I bet you're a good one at it."

At heart, Winnifred was a *comediienne*. She enjoyed the situation immensely. She thought it was very funny, indeed. There was no reason why it should not be made still funnier. "What a fine sketch it would make for vaudeville," she thought to herself. "I would have it written up but for one reason — Olney could not play the countryman."

"Mr. Thoroughbrace," said Miss Winnie, "did you ever see what they call a melodram?"

Mr. Thoroughbrace was not such a fool as he looked: "I've seen lots of fellers drink 'em."

"Why, how funny you are, Mr. Thoroughbrace. I once played in a melodram called *The Night Express*. I had a lover — in the play — in fact, I had two; one was poor but nice; the other was rich and perfectly horrid. The night that I was to be married, my future husband did not appear. We waited, but he did not come."

She was acting now.

"I felt that my other lover, the wicked one, had laid

some plot to entrap him, so, clad as I was in my wedding dress, I rushed out into the dark, cold winter night and went, I knew not where, but the hand of Providence directed me and I came upon his prostrate form bound with leathern thongs to the railroad track. I tried to untie the knots, but I could not. Oh, cruel, cruel fate! When so near to happiness to have my love taken from me! But something must be done to save his life. I knew that the night express was due in a few minutes. I tore my white veil from my head and ran up the track, waving it in the air. I must flag the train! I ran across something—I knew not what. Oh, joy! it was a switch, and, providentially, it was unlocked. Love steeled my arm. I threw the switch over, and when the night express came thundering down, it was thrown upon the siding, and my lover's life was saved."

"Well, by thunder!" said Mr. Thoroughbrace, "he ought to have married you after that."

"He did—in the play," said Winnifred. "It ran one hundred and forty-four nights, and I got so tired of saving his life that, on the last night of the show, I only made believe throw the switch, and the train ran over him."

As she said this, she burst into a hearty laugh.

"Didn't they arrest yer?" asked Mr. Thoroughbrace.

"Oh, no," said Winnifred, "but the stage manager fined me twenty-five dollars for the locomotive which was knocked into pieces when it came in contact with my stage lover. You see, you've got something to learn, Mr. Thoroughbrace, about stage illusions."

"Oh, yes," said Thoroughbrace, "I'm goin' to learn and I'm goin' to make it pay, too."

Miss Winnifred had not had her fill of fun: "Did you ever see *Camille*?" she asked, but she pronounced the word in such a way as to lead Mr. Thoroughbrace to remark:

"No, but I owned one once."

"It's a great play," said Winnifred. "The heroine is consumptive, and she coughs all the way through the piece. She has a devoted lover, but his father did not like her and he begs her to give the young man up. She does so, but it makes her cough grow worse, and she dies in the last act."

"Do they bury her in the play?" asked Mr. Thoroughbrace.

"No," said Winnifred, "they don't allow that kind of coffin on the stage."

Miss Winton did not propose to lose her hold upon her interested auditor: "Oh, Mr. Thoroughbrace," she cried, "did you ever see that beautiful play, *East Lynne*?"

"It's somewhere in Massachusetts, ain't it?" asked the Major.

"Oh, it's anywhere and everywhere. I have played in it a great many times. I am very naughty in the first part of it, for I get jealous of my husband, who is light haired, and run away with a gentleman who is dark haired. But I become repentant and return home only to find my husband has married the young lady of whom I was jealous. I disguise myself as a nurse and secure a position to look after my child that I had so wickedly deserted. Of course, I have heart disease or some other serious trouble, and when my husband that was, discovers me embracing and kissing my own child, he reproves me sharply — then he penetrates my disguise and I die to slow music. Oh, it is very affecting! Then I have played in comic opera, and burlesque, and extravaganza. Oh, I do so love to dance! I never hear dance music but I am crazy to move about to its mazy measures."

"I like it too," said Mr. Thoroughbrace. "We do a lot of dancin' up in New Hampshire in the winter, and

there's a little hunch back, named Stub Dutcher, that lives up in Snickersville, and he can jest pull the music out o' a fiddle. When he gits excited, he jest sings and drums with his feet, and works away on that fiddle, and there's a hooray, I can tell yer."

"I wish we were there now, don't you, Mr. Thoroughbrace?"

"Well, we're here, ain't we?"

"Can you waltz?" asked Winnifred.

"I can dance anything," said the Major, "if you'll only take me along with yer."

And she did. Around the room they went, until the Major became so dizzy that he lost his footing and fell to the floor. Winnifred essayed to help him to his feet. At that moment the office door opened and Mr. Dangerfield entered.

CHAPTER XII

A BREACH OF PROMISE

"WHAT'S the matter, Major?" asked Mr. Dangerfield.
"Did the pattern in the carpet trip you up?"

"He tumbled," remarked Winnifred.

"Well, Major, I never thought that you would do that quite so soon," said Mr. Dangerfield.

Mr. Thoroughbrace was out of breath and did not feel inclined to join in the conversation. He sat down at Colonel Hix's desk and made a pretense of examining the letters and papers thereon.

"So you are going to try it again," said Mr. Dangerfield, addressing Winnie.

"Yes, on one condition. The Colonel borrowed some money of me a long time ago. I shall not stir a step unless he pays me."

"Oh, the Colonel's all right," said Mr. Dangerfield. "The ghost has walked to the tune of a hundred," and he tapped his pocket-book which was in his inside vest pocket. "I say, Winnie, after we've been on the road about three weeks, we'll get married." Raising his voice, he said: "Did you know, Major, that Miss Winnie and I are engaged?"

"We must have her, if she'll go," said Mr. Thoroughbrace. "I like good-lookers in a play."

"He'll have to tumble again," said Dangerfield to Winnie; "he didn't fall far enough."

"Let it go that way, Olney. Don't tell everybody about it, for you know it always interferes with an actress's professional attraction."

Mr. Thoroughbrace, having recovered his breath, thought

he would take part in the conversation. He came from behind the desk and addressed the young lady :

"If you go with us, you won't want that wardrobe and backer, will yer?"

"What's that, sir?" asked Mr. Dangerfield.

"Come along, Olney, I'll tell you all about it."

"No, you must not go!" cried Mr. Thoroughbrace.

"The Colonel said you had to stay till he got back."

Miss Winton took Mr. Dangerfield's arm and they walked towards the door. There they turned and, looking at Mr. Thoroughbrace, both burst into a hearty laugh, and, an instant later, were gone. Mr. Thoroughbrace felt that this was a critical moment:

"It won't do to let them get away. Hix will blame me if I do. I ain't so sure that feller'll come back. Guess he wanted that hundred for a weddin' tower."

There was but one course for him to follow and, again grasping his hat and umbrella, he dashed after them.

As Shakespeare says: "We have our entrances and our exits," and the departure of Mr. Thoroughbrace was quickly followed by the appearance of Mr. Dodd, who seemed to be in a greatly excited frame of mind.

"Shall I remain with that heartless wretch? I could forgive him for deceiving that witless countryman, but to trifle with the affections of that vision of loveliness I saw here a short time ago, proves conclusively that he is worse than base."

Mr. Dodd grew melodramatic: "Oh, thou villain! I repeat it, oh, thou villain! James Orlando Hix did love Rosa, and Rosa did love James Orlando. She still loves him, but James Orlando does not know that Rosa is an heiress and he will look coldly upon her."

A brisk step was heard and Colonel Hix entered. He looked quickly about the room.

"Where's Thoroughbrace? Who's been in since I've been out?"

"Miss Cholmondeley called," said Mr. Dodd. "She's a lovely creature."

"Lovely?" exclaimed the Colonel. "She just escapes being pretty."

Mr. Dodd was determined to express his sentiments: "I think she's an angel."

"Well, we don't want her," said the Colonel. "We've got one angel and another would be too much richness, as the French say."

"I judge from the tone of your remarks," said Mr. Dodd, sternly, "that you do not intend to keep your word and make her Mrs. Colonel Hix."

The Colonel was evidently desirous of changing the subject:

"Your last remark, Mr. Dodd, reminds me of a story. I am not very good at telling stories, as you well know, but I'll do the best I can. A good many years ago, I knew a gentleman who belonged to a military company and he was so popular with the members that he was chosen captain. His name was Jenkins. His wife was a very vain woman, and when she heard of her husband's promotion, she went out into the back yard and, leaning over an empty barrel, took great delight in saying in a loud voice: Mrs. Captain Jenkins! Mrs. Captain Jenkins!! The neighbors overheard it and her husband learned of it. One day, at dinner, he referred to the matter and his wife retorted: Well, if you are Captain Isaac Jenkins, who am I? Now, what do you think the Captain said?"

Mr. Dodd shook his head.

"Well, of course," said the Colonel, "I should not use any such language, but he told her flatly that she was the same old fool she always was."

"Well," said Mr. Dodd, "the story's all right, but I don't see how it applies to Miss Cholmondeley. It is not my fault that I know what I do, but she has a great many letters that you have written to her and I heard her say to Mr. Thoroughbrace that she loved you devotedly. I'm sure that if you don't marry her, she will bring a suit for breach of promise. Oh, how could you, Colonel, cause such a lovely creature to die of a broken heart?"

"Broken fiddlesticks!" exclaimed the Colonel. "She's been in love with a dozen and has survived it. She has no case and, if she had, she's too smart to marry a man whose fortune is still ahead of him — and it may be out of sight."

Mr. Dodd turned away. "He doesn't know she's an heiress," he said to himself. "Why should I disclose the fact to him? Perhaps she may yet look with favor upon me."

He approached the Colonel: "Perhaps I have no right to say it, sir, but, as a gentleman, I think the manner in which you propose to treat her is contemptible."

The Colonel's voice rose to a high pitch: "Mr. Dodd, I will attend to part of my affairs while you attend to the rest, but bear in mind that my love-making does not come in your department." As he spoke, he advanced threateningly towards Mr. Dodd, who stepped backward quickly, expecting a blow.

Another visitor entered. She was very tall and very thin, and dressed in a manner that accentuated her stature. Her hair was dark, her eyes deep set, and her cheeks pallid. She might have chosen a costume, the hue of which would have lent some color to her personality, but she had not done so. Her dress, cape, gloves, and hat were all of a lavender tint and, as the Colonel caught sight of her, he said to himself:

"A bunch of violets."

"Mr. Dodd, we won't rehearse any more just now."
Then leaning over, he whispered a single word in Mr. Dodd's ear:

"Bounce!"

CHAPTER XIII

A NEW BEGINNER

"EXCUSE me, madam, whom do you wish to see?" asked Colonel Hix, as he offered her a chair.

"Thanks, I prefer to stand," the young lady replied — but she sat down.

As the Colonel seated himself at his desk, the newcomer stood up.

Not having received an answer to his inquiry, the Colonel asked again, pointedly, but politely: "Whom do you wish to see?"

"Colonel Hix, the theatrical manager."

"Madam, he is before you."

"I called to see, Colonel, if you would like to purchase a play — a farcical comedy."

"Madam, they've lost their grip."

"But mine is so original," the young lady persisted.

"Impossible!" said the Colonel. "Every letter in the alphabet of the art has been used over and over again, except the Q's and Z's."

The young lady took the cue. "I could name mine Q-Z. I could call it anything."

"Allow me to suggest a name," said the Colonel. "Call it Off."

The young lady had other eggs in her basket. "I have a very fine sensational melodrama, in six acts and nine tableaux."

"No hope for it, unless it's worse than anything I've had. Melodrama, nowadays, is like crime, unless it reveals some unheard of atrocity, it falls flat — and so does the manager."

The young lady had not exhausted her repertoire:

"Could you use a comic opera?"

"American?"

"Yes sir, patriotic, too. I selected the lyrics from our best poets. A gentleman friend of mine whistled the melodies, and my music teacher took them down and wrote the accompaniment."

"Do you play?" asked the Colonel.

"I am considered very proficient on the banjo."

"Who wrote the book?" was the Colonel's next question.

"There's no book to it. It is all songs and music."

"Oh, I see," cried the Colonel, "a grand opera. Have it embalmed — you won't need it for twenty years."

She took the next one from the bottom of the bag. "I have a most laughable burlesque. It was produced one consecutive night by amateurs."

"Did you play in it?"

"Oh, yes, I took the principal part — the hero."

"It must have been very funny," said the Colonel.

"The fact is, I've just bought one. If I had known of yours first, I probably should have preferred it. Whether the public will want it or not, only time and money will show."

There was an accent of despair in the young lady's voice, as she asked: "What do the people want?"

"Don't know. No manager knows. If he did, he'd buy it."

Then with passionate fervor she exclaimed: "Although it destroys my brightest hopes, I must take the advice of my friends."

"And that is?"

"To adopt the theatrical profession as a permanency."

"You must have some very fine friends who are professional in their tastes," was the Colonel's comment.

"Yes, I am fortunate, sir, in my friends. They are always willing to give me good advice."

The young lady stood expectantly. The Colonel thought for a moment, and then said, suddenly:

"I am afraid I shall have to give you a polite negative."

The young lady tossed her head: "Oh, I know what that means."

"Indeed! What is your interpretation?"

"It means, sir, to say yes, and then not do it."

"Not at all. It means being obliged to say one thing when you wish very much that you could say something else."

The Colonel arose and approached the young lady, a benignant smile upon his face. "My dear young lady, our business acquaintance has been of very short duration, but I have had great experience in theatrical matters, and I am confident I could give you more practical advice in one minute than your good friends could in a lifetime."

"Oh, my dear sir, if you would be so kind."

"Will you promise to follow it?"

"With all my heart," and she looked up into his face with an expression which was almost childlike.

"Well, my dear young lady, my advice to you is, to take the first train back to the little country town from which you came, decide on one of your numerous suitors, forget your dreams of histrionic eminence, and spend your days a happy wife and mother."

The young lady was, at first, astonished; then she became indignant, and a red spot showed in the centre of each pallid cheek.

"I won't do any such thing, and you know I won't. Why should I? Haven't I a good voice? Can you find any fault with my figure? Isn't my profile good? Isn't my smile attractive?"

The Colonel pondered. Should he give her an impolite negative or a qualified affirmative? She was a new beginner, and would be satisfied with a small salary; and small salaries increased the manager's profits. He ventured to ask:

"Would you try a very small part to begin with?"

"I'll play any part, however small. A little child!"

"Would you like to be a fairy?" the Colonel asked.

The young lady was agitated. Visions of professional advancement floated before her eyes. "I am — I mean — oh, yes, certainly."

The Colonel thought that the time had now come for a demonstrative affirmative. He extended his hand, which the young lady clasped within hers.

"Anything to-day, Colonel? Oh, yes, I see; I'll call more opportunely" — and Mr. Steele closed the door, softly, and tiptoed to the elevator.

"Well, my dear young lady, I think I can have a part written in for you in a new burlesque I am just going to put upon the road. But if I were you, I wouldn't let my friends know about it until I had advanced a little farther in the profession. You had better have a stage name."

She drew from her wrist-bag a card-case and handed him a dainty bit of pasteboard.

He read: "Mlle. Idaline Dumaresque."

CHAPTER XIV

CASTING THE PLAY

COLONEL HIX was not satisfied with a cursory inspection of the dainty little bit of cardboard which he held in his hand. He put on his eye-glasses and scrutinized it carefully.

"What's this?" he asked, "Paris?" For he had espied that magic word in the lower right-hand corner.

"Oh, yes," replied Mlle. Dumaresque, "I was born there."

"Really!" exclaimed the Colonel.

"Oh, yes," the young lady repeated, "they say it is one of the prettiest towns in Maine."

"And your right name is —" the Colonel questioned.

The young lady made a courtesy worthy of her birth-place, and said, archly:

"Oh, I shall use my stage name, exclusively, in all my professional business."

"Why, certainly," said the Colonel, and he felt that further consideration of the subject was at an end.

A loud noise, as of numerous and rapidly moving feet, was heard in the hall-way. The Colonel was thankful for the interruption, for even the most *blase* man of the world may become bashful in the presence of country innocence.

Miss Winton and Mr. Dangerfield entered, closely followed by Mr. Thoroughbrace, gesticulating wildly with both hands, as he might have done to get a brood of chickens into their coop.

"Well, Hix," he cried, "I stuck to 'em and fetched 'em back. They tried to get away, but I've been deputy sheriff and I knew how to run 'em in."

Mr. Dangerfield did not speak until he had assumed a graceful posture in one of the Colonel's luxuriant easy-chairs :

"I shouldn't have come, but I didn't care to have my friends see me engaged in a street row—with a total stranger."

"Always obey orders, if it breaks friendship," interjected Mr. Thoroughbrace.

The Colonel felt that he must take his partner's side : "Well, Major, I'm glad you brought them back, and they'll be glad, too ! I have decided to form my company at once, and begin rehearsals to-morrow morning." He stepped to the door of the private office : "Mr. Dodd, I would like the manuscript of *Allurio and Adelina*. You will find it in the safe."

"Do you keep it in the safe, Colonel ?" asked Dangerfield. "That play wouldn't burn if you put it in a furnace."

"My contract with the author requires that I should keep the manuscript in a safe place," and he turned to his partner — "and if I lost every dollar I possessed, I would keep my contract."

"But really, Colonel, you are not going to do that stupid thing, are you ?" persisted Mr. Dangerfield. "No plot to it. Worst thing I ever read. No sense to it."

"I agree with you, Mr. Dangerfield," said the Colonel. "I know it's a bad piece, but it's so very bad that it's positively funny. But the opportunities for the actors are immense ! What there is of the costumes will be gorgeous. The music is way up."

"Then it will have to be transposed," remarked Miss Winton. "I am not going to spoil my voice in a burlesque."

The Colonel went on : "The printing is going to be

the best on the road. I am going to paint every town red, thirty days before we make our triumphant entrance."

The Colonel's prognostications were cut short by the entrance of Mr. Dodd, who placed the manuscript in his hands.

"Now, let me see how I shall cast the play. Count Lobsterclawski, Mr. Dangerfield." Turning to that gentleman, he remarked: "You can make it the greatest comedy creation on the stage. Prince Allurio, Miss Winton."

"Tights?" asked that young lady.

"Of course," said the Colonel, "how could you play a prince without tights?"

"What color?" she persisted.

"As natural as possible."

During the progress of this conversation, Mr. Thoroughbrace's eyes and ears were in full requisition; at the close of it, his open mouth bespoke an even greater interest in the proceedings.

"Ah, excuse me," said the Colonel, "ladies and gentlemen—Miss Dumaresque. She has kindly volunteered to assume the small but important role of Jeannette, a peasant."

"But you said that I was to be a fairy," cried the lady from Paris.

"Well, you are," explained the Colonel; "part peasant, part fairy."

Miss Dumaresque looked pleased. "Then I have a double role?"

The Colonel assented: "Yes, you double."

Mr. Dangerfield remarked in an undertone to Miss Winton, who was leaning on the back of his chair, with her face in close proximity to his—"She'll double, and the audience, too."

"You're jealous," said Miss Winton, *sotto voce*. "I never saw a comedian who did not want all the fat."

"Anything to-day, Colonel?" said a familiar voice.

"Come in, Mr. Steele," cried the Colonel. "Perhaps I have something for you."

"Perhaps!" thought Mr. Steele, but he said: "All right, I'll stop a minute."

"Could you play king in a burlesque? Heavy villain — old man character — sort of combination part."

"I can play the king," Mr. Steele replied, "if I am sure of my crown, which I will willingly swap for simoleons. Any chance for specialties?"

"Full of 'em — more than half made up of 'em — nothing novel, of course — it's dangerous to try anything new."

Mr. Steele thought for a moment. "Well, if there's a chance to create a new part, I wouldn't object to looking at it. When do we go out?"

Mr. Dangerfield whispered in Miss Winton's ear: "When do we come in?"

"Now, I'm all right," said the Colonel, "except the other king and the Princess Adelina. She's got to be a pretty woman."

Mr. Thoroughbrace's interest became vocal: "Opry singer?"

The Colonel nodded, then added: "She must be a first-rate singer."

"How about that girl of yours?" asked Mr. Thoroughbrace. "She was in here while you was out. She said she was going to be married to you, and I didn't think there was any doubt but what she'd come back."

"You're mistaken, Major, I don't know any such person."

"Oh, I guess you do. She's got something to make you remember — a whole armful of letters and telephone

dispatches. She says she's got a little fortune of her own, and unless I'm mistaken, she's come to stay."

"Oh, I shan't have any trouble getting some one for that part. New York is full of pretty women who would like to play the princess in a burlesque. Why, I've lost six leading ladies —"

"Lost 'em? How'd that come about?" asked Mr. Thoroughbrace.

"Why, you see," said the Colonel, "money is always looking for titles — and everyone of my princesses married a millionaire. That's what I call losing them. But what troubles me now, is not what I've lost but what I haven't got. That odd king troubles me. I must have a pair or the other one is no good."

Mr. Dodd had been looking for an opportunity: "Don't you think I could play that part, Colonel? I've a good tenor voice. You know I'm just as well satisfied with a small salary as with the promise of a big one. Besides, I could look out for the baggage, keep an eye on the man at the door, count the house, make up the box office, attend to your correspondence, etcetera, etcetera, without interfering with my kingly duties."

Mr. Thoroughbrace jumped to his feet: "Better get him, Hix. He's got the most sense of any actor I've come across. Young man, I want you when I buy that new hotel up in Laconia. You and me could run the whole business."

The Colonel struck an attitude, with uplifted hand: "Major, I'm happy to oblige you. I am always willing to bow to the superior judgment of my partner." With a sweep of his hand, he turned towards Mr. Dodd, and exclaimed, dramatically: "You are engaged."

"I know I am," said a sweet voice.

All eyes were turned, and they beheld Miss Cholmondeley, who had entered, unobserved.

"If there was the slightest doubt about it, the letter and telegrams in my possession would prove it, would they not, Ollie?"

Mr. Dodd turned away, saying to himself—"Oh, Oily."

Mr. Dangerfield moved uneasily in his chair.

"What's the matter, Olney?" asked Winnie.

"Matter enough," was the rejoinder: "I've got my Friday necktie on with my Thursday suit of clothes."

Mr. Thoroughbrace laughed, then the company smiled.

"Don't you understand, Colonel?" asked the Major.

The Colonel realized that he was in a fix, but he was equal to the occasion.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, smilingly, "Miss Rosa Cholmondeley."

"She's the best of all the Josephines. She told me so. You'd better get her, Hix."

"Again, Major, I am happy to oblige you. I know of no one better fitted to the part. I am happy to engage you, Miss Cholmondeley, as the princess in the burlesque extravaganza of Allurio and Adelina, or the Rival Kings. You will have your name twice on the programme—in the title and in the cast. We will have a reading rehearsal at ten, sharp, at the Museum Square Theatre. I will drop in and see Schneider about it when I go to dinner—I mean, when we go to dinner."

As Colonel Hix was looking over the parts, preparatory to their distribution, Winnie whispered to Olney:

"Won't it be nice to have two engaged couples in the company?"

"There'll be three, soon. See how the Major keeps his eye on the fairy."

After the Colonel had given out the parts, he remarked: "Now, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to say—Mr. Thoroughbrace, allow me to say—that this piece will be put

upon the road in the finest possible manner. A partnership between my well recognized managerial ability, and my worthy partner's financial resources"—here he bowed to the Major—"for I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, Major is a solid man—such a partnership, coupled with the professional assistance of such a galaxy of stars as yourselves—" the Company acknowledged the compliment.

"Put in a good word for the piece, Colonel, it needs it," cried Mr. Dangerfield.

"And with a sparkling burlesque, in the composition of which I have had the invaluable assistance of my esteemed friend, Mr. Dangerfield—" this palpable hit caused hearty laughter. "Again, I say, ladies and gentlemen, such partners and such a company, and such a play—again, I say—if we make money we shall do well."

As Mr. Dodd and Miss Dumaresque walked down a side street, in search of a restaurant, the young lady remarked: "You have a very important position in the company, Mr. Dodd."

"Oh, yes," said the young man, as he flicked the ashes from his cigarette. "Of course, we have an advance agent to go ahead with our hangers and posters. He'll cover the walls and windows with our bills—all our names will be in big type. When we get to town, I shall have to make contracts with the landlord for our boarding and our lodging, look out for our baggage and the scenery, and the properties, and write the locals for the newspapers. You heard me tell the Colonel what I could do when we got inside the theatre."

"Oh, yes," said Miss Dumaresque, softly. Then she added, "What a wonderful man you are."

Mr. Dodd stopped. They both looked up and saw a sign which bespeaks both healthful food and economy—
DAIRY LUNCH.

CHAPTER XV

READY FOR REHEARSAL

A LITTLE after nine o'clock the next morning, a young lady might have been seen walking slowly back and forth on the sidewalk at the rear of the Museum Square Theatre. She held a book in her hand, into which she glanced occasionally. She would then look up and appear to be saying something to herself. She was apparently regardless of the passers-by, and did not even notice when old Jimmy Truesdale unlocked the stage door, and, bringing out his wooden armchair, sat down in it to enjoy his morning pipe.

His attention was attracted to the young lady who seemed intensely interested in the book she was reading. Jimmy at once divined that she was an actress, or wished to be one. Jimmy was very dignified, and had very little to say to the members of the different companies which played in the theatre. To put it in his epigrammatical fashion: "Talk is cheap, and so are most of the people who talk it."

Despite his usual reticence, he was on the point of speaking to the young lady, when a young man came up and addressed her. Seeing Mr. Truesdale, he cried out:

"Hullo, Jimmy, we're going to rehearse here this morning — Colonel Hix's Burlesque Company."

After taking a long whiff, Jimmy removed his pipe from his mouth. As the smoke cleared away, he said:

"Yes, the stage manager told me last night, after the performance. Everything is all ready, and if it isn't, it won't make much difference in a burlesque."

"A pleasant morning, Miss Dumaresque," had been Mr. Steele's salutation.

"Yes, it is lovely," was the young lady's response. "I am so glad. It is so auspicious for our new play."

"I don't think it will make much difference at rehearsal," said Mr. Steele; "wait until we get on the road — that is when the weather counts. But come in. Have you ever been in a theatre?"

"Not in a real one. I have acted in a hall — of course, we had a temporary stage."

Mr. Steele reflected that he had been on the stage temporarily a great many times—with Colonel Hix's last company but one, for example.

When they reached the stage, they found the theatre dark, with the exception of a single gas burner.

"Why, how dismal it looks!" cried Miss Dumaresque. "Don't they light the theatre up at rehearsals, the same as they do at night?"

"Certainly not. With a bright company like ours it isn't needed, you know."

Mr. Steele excused himself, saying that he would be right back. Miss Dumaresque embraced the opportunity to approach the footlights. For the time being, she imagined each seat occupied by an attentive listener. "What a fine chance to go over my part before the others come in," she thought to herself.

Striking what she considered an appropriate attitude, she cried:

"Oh, come and see a maiden die of unrequited passion!"

Mr. Steele had returned. "What are you going to do that for? What makes you talk that way?"

"Why, because it's in the book," Miss Dumaresque replied. "I didn't even have a chance to eat any breakfast, I was studying so hard. I don't believe I shall have it all learned by ten o'clock, either."

"You don't mean to say you are trying to learn your part before ten o'clock, do you?"

"Why, of course; didn't the Colonel say there would be a rehearsal then?"

Mr. Steele laughed: "Yes, but it will only be a reading rehearsal. Nobody will know his lines."

"Oh, I see, a reading rehearsal."

"Yes, we will just skim through and give the cues, you know. We don't know our lines until we've been on the road a week, and perhaps never."

"Mr. Steele, what are you going to be in the play?"

"Oh, I am a king. There's another one, but he don't amount to much. What is your line?"

"I play a double role. I am a fairy and a peasant."

"As you are on so much, I shall probably meet you somewhere during the play."

"Oh, Mr. Steele, I fall in love with some one. Of course, it is one of the kings. Is it you?"

"Oh, no, I am a widower with a grown-up daughter."

"I see no reason why that should be a bar to our affections — in the play."

Mr. Steele waved his right hand, depreciatingly: "Authors will do most anything. Perhaps this one will write in a love scene for you."

"Oh, I hope he will. Do you really think he would? I should like to meet him. Where is he?"

"The Colonel said he had gone to Europe."

Miss Dumaresque mused. At last she said: "I could write in the part myself if Colonel Hix would let me. I have written plays, you know."

Mr. Steele surveyed his companion critically. What he would have said next will never be known, for voices were heard, and, a moment later, Mr. Dodd and Miss Cholmondeley arrived.

The usual salutations were exchanged and then Mr. Dodd and Miss Cholmondeley sat down upon "a mossy bank," which formed part of the stage setting.

Miss Dumaresque was a persistent young lady and, having derived considerable information from her conversation with Mr. Steele, was anxious to obtain more.

"Did you ever play in Pinafore, Mr. Steele?" she asked.

"Yes—the anchor."

"I should not think you were heavy enough for that part," Miss Dumaresque retorted.

"Oh, I worked up to it. I took to that just after I was shaken as a door-mat."

Miss Dumaresque looked surprised: "Why, what do you mean?"

"Oh, I mean servant—the first and last thing you see when you go a-visiting."

Miss Dumaresque tossed her head: "I never remember servants."

"Authors seldom do, or stage managers, either."

Mr. Steele's remark was followed by a merry peal of laughter.

"That was very funny Mr. Dodd, wasn't it?" said Miss Cholmondeley.

Miss Dumaresque turned her attention to the leading lady and her companion: "What is so funny? Is it something in the play?"

"Oh, no," said Mr. Dodd; "it's too funny for this play. It's a new way of committing suicide."

Miss Dumaresque became greatly interested. "I come very near dying in this play. I try to commit suicide by drinking hemlock wine."

"Oh, that's an old-fashioned way," remarked Mr. Dodd. "The new way would be a great deal better."

"Why don't you give Miss Dumaresque the point, if it's worth anything?" said Mr. Steele.

Miss Cholmondeley joined in the entreaty: "Oh, do,

Mr. Dodd. That little bit of stage business may be of great use to her."

"All right," said Dodd. "It's to commit suicide by eating yourself."

Miss Dumaresque was astonished. "Why, I don't see how!" she cried.

"My dear Miss Dumaresque," Miss Cholmondeley began, "nobody has done it yet, but Mr. Dodd and I think it would be so funny if somebody would try it."

She turned to Mr. Dodd: "What is this burlesque about? You copied it, I believe."

"It's an old-fashioned burlesque. You are the daughter of a king. I am your lover's father — I would I were your husband."

Miss Cholmondeley repelled the insidious attack: "Impossible!" she cried. "Olly is to be my husband."

"Not in the play?" suggested Mr. Dodd.

Miss Cholmondeley gave her head a little shake: "Oh, no."

"Well, I meant in the play," said Mr. Dodd.

Miss Cholmondeley realized the mistake she had made, but would not acknowledge it. "I thought you did," she replied, coolly.

A noise was heard and then a sound which indicated that something had fallen. A moment later, Colonel Hix and Mr. Thoroughbrace entered, the latter brushing the dust from his clothing.

"It's so mighty dark here, I didn't see that thing stickin' out and I went plum into it. I ain't hurt nowheres, but it kind o' shook me up."

"Oh, you'll be all right," said the Colonel, "when you've had another good dinner same as you had yesterday. How did you feel after you got through, Major?"

"I thought I was a full partner, sure enough."

"Pretty good dinner, wasn't it?" asked the Colonel.

"I've eaten better beans," was Mr. Thoroughbrace's comment.

"They couldn't have been. Those that you had were vanilla beans — very expensive — imported."

Eating and eatables were favorite topics with Mr. Thoroughbrace. "That mackerel was pretty good, but it wasn't A1 Gloucester."

The Colonel held up his hands: "Mackerel, Major! Why, that was turbot, the most expensive fish in the market. The *chef* told me it was the only one to be found in New York yesterday. The game laws affect all such things, you know."

"Did you go to Moretti's?" asked Mr. Steele.

"Oh, no," said the Colonel, "we had a real Roman dinner at Mr. Dam's, Union Square."

"I would have gone there," said Mr. Steele, "but those free lunches are so expensive."

The Colonel dilated upon the subject: "It was a real course dinner. We began with real mock-turtle soup."

Mr. Thoroughbrace was in a critical mood. "That may be a pretty rich dish, but I would match beef stew agin it any day."

The Colonel went on: "Then we had *pate de foie gras*."

The Major shook his head: "I don't like that kind of cheese."

"But what took the Major was lamprey eels fixed as old Lucullus used to like them."

Mr. Steele whispered to Mr. Dodd: "Sausages?"

Mr. Thoroughbrace evidently had appreciated that part of the dinner, for he remarked: "Them was good, and the liquor was just my idee of what's needed for hotel trade — not too expensive, but right up to its work."

The Colonel laughed: "You stopped just in time. I am afraid you couldn't have stood much more."

"Oh, no," Mr. Thoroughbrace rejoined, "you are totally wrong, there. I could have stood more drinking. Why, my throat is dry now. It was the standin' up part that tired me out. For my part, I like to sit down to a table when I eat."

"Exactly," said the Colonel, "but you see, they have so many customers, there wouldn't be any room for the tables. Why, the greater part of the people here in New York have to stand up for their dinners. The proprietors fought against it, but they had to come to it."

Mr. Steele came to the Colonel's assistance: "Why, to oblige customers, I have seen hundreds of dinners hung up."

Mr. Thoroughbrace was suspicious: "So have I—in a dinner-pail."

The Colonel took out his watch: "Ten minutes past ten. Mr. Dangerfield is late, as usual. We shall have to begin the rehearsal without him."

The delinquents were at hand. "Are we late, Colonel?" asked Miss Winton.

"Of course, we are," said Mr. Dangerfield. "I meant to be. I don't come on until the others are tired."

The Colonel was inclined to be lenient: "Well, considering it's the first rehearsal, I will not fine you to-day. Owing to the author's absence, I shall try to fill his place and give you his idea, as he gave it to me."

Mr. Dangerfield was reclining upon a settle, his head resting upon one arm, while his neatly polished boots projected over the other. He assumed a sitting posture and remarked: "I don't believe when he gave it to you, he had any idea that it would be produced."

The Colonel ignored the interruption: "I promise you, ladies and gentlemen, that this piece will be done differently from any other play you ever saw."

From all there came the question : "How's that?"

"It will be played as the author wrote it," the Colonel replied.

The sarcastic comment came from Mr. Dangerfield :
"Oh, you mean in private."

The play had not yet run the gauntlet.

"No true actor ever uses an author's exact words," said Miss Winton. "The ideas are usually enough to remember. Now I prefer to have a sketch of a part and work it up myself. Does an author ever do more than to give an idea to the scene painter? No. Well, isn't an actor as much of an artist as a scene painter?"

Mr. Steele took his part from his book and examined it :
"I don't like these typewriters. They don't bring out the character of the language. Looks as if the thoughts were dead and laid out. Now, in writing, you see, you can spell all the big words in large letters, and that helps an actor."

"My dear Colonel, don't you think burlesque has about gone by?" asked Miss Cholmondeley.

The Colonel's expression, as he replied, was a knowing one : "Well, for the same reason that tragedy has. We shall have to wait until our leading comedians decide to become tragedians."

"There's too much music in the piece," was the next criticism from Mr. Dangerfield.

"Why, there are only twelve pieces," said the Colonel.

"Well, I mean, there's too much for a man that can't sing."

It was well for the author that he was not present, for Mr. Dodd joined in the almost universal condemnation of the work :

"There's too much talky-talky in it. Why, I left out more than half of it when I copied it."

"Where's the feller that writ this piece?" asked Mr. Thoroughbrace.

"In Europe," his partner replied.

Winnie whispered to Olney: "Waiting for his royalty so he can get back."

"I say, Hixie," asked Mr. Dangerfield, "why don't you send what you have left over to him? Perhaps he can use it. Anything to get it out of the country."

The next criticism came from an unexpected source.

"I think the author is very unjust to me," remarked Miss Dumaresque. "I am unmarried at the end of the play."

"Don't be worried, dear," said Mr. Dangerfield, "there'll be a long time ahead after this play stops."

The Colonel felt that the members of the company had had sufficient latitude: "Ladies and gentlemen, as I said before, this play must be given as the author wrote it in order to secure the copyright."

Mr. Dangerfield was inexorable: "You know, Colonel, many a better play has been lost that way."

The Colonel continued: "This play has been copyrighted, patented, printed, recorded, sworn to —"

"It hasn't been sworn at yet," interjected the irrepressible Mr. Dangerfield.

"—and I am the sole owner," said the Colonel, proudly.

Mr. Dangerfield was in a sarcastic mood: "Then the public will be justified in holding you personally responsible."

The Colonel looked at Mr. Thoroughbrace: "Yes, me and my partner — I morally, and he financially."

Mr. Dangerfield whispered to Miss Winton: "The Colonel will notice it the least."

The Colonel's patience was exhausted. He clapped his hands three times. "Clear the stage!" he cried sharply. A moment later he was its sole occupant.

Mr. Dangerfield remarked to Miss Winton, as they disappeared from the Colonel's view behind a wing: "The Colonel's creditors would do that with pleasure."

CHAPTER XVI

"THE GHOST WALKS"

As soon as the company was out of earshot, the Colonel turned to Mr. Thoroughbrace, and said: "Major, I'm going to strike you now."

"What for? What have I done?" ejaculated the Major. "While you've been jawin' about the piece, I've been lookin' over my contract."

"Oh, you don't understand," said the Colonel. "I sent them away because I wished to say a word to you in private. I make it a rule never to discuss business matters before the members of my company."

"Oh, I see," said the Major. "Well, what's up? What are you goin' to hit me for?"

"I'm afraid you don't catch my meaning. What I mean by striking you is finding out whether you are solid and responsible."

The Major straightened himself up, and, putting his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, wriggled his fingers, and remarked, somewhat pompously: "I'll show you that I'm solid."

"That will suit me exactly. You see, the members of the company are all engaged on verbal contracts and they want cash down to bind them."

The Major laughed: "Well, we've got plenty of money, haven't we? Why don't you pay them if they want their wages in advance?"

"My dear Major, don't say wages. Actors never render professional services for wages. We managers pay ordinary actors salaries, while great actors receive emoluments for their services."

"It don't make no difference what you call it," said the Major, "it's money paid out, anyway. Why don't you take it out of the capital? How much do they want?"

The Colonel thought for a moment: "Oh, say fifty dollars apiece, two hundred and fifty dollars. I'd take it out of the capital, but I don't want to mix up the accounts at the office. Don't you understand? But don't let us argue on such a little point when everything is going on lovely?"

The Colonel's argument appeared to convince the Major: "Oh, I didn't mean anything. I've got plenty of money."

"Of course you have. You couldn't be here if you didn't have, and you're going to make more. I mean to have you stay with me as partner just as long as we can make money."

The Major pulled vigorously at his chin whiskers: "That'll be good for Leander, won't it?"

"It will be good for all of us," said the Colonel. "Ah, thank you," and he took the money which Mr. Thoroughbrace had extracted from the big leathern wallet.

The Major could not give up the money, however, without a protest. "This paying out hard cash all the time seems strange to me. It's kinder new. I allus get thirty days on my bills. I ain't used to payin' out spot cash."

"You will get used to it if you stay with me," remarked the Colonel. Then he added: "Keep account of that money, Major."

"I won't forget it when the end of the first week comes 'round."

"Now, if you will excuse me for a short time, my dear Major, I will make the members of the Company happy by paying them their salaries. We had to do it; they wouldn't have put on a rag until they got their money."

The Major looked perplexed: "What do you mean by rags?"

"Oh, I refer to their costumes. I am going to make this a dress rehearsal. I thought it would be much more interesting and instructive to you if they were dressed as they will be when they play the piece. Don't you understand?"

The Major grinned: "Yaas, I guess I can see through that."

The Colonel felt in his pocket: "Ah, here are the keys to the costume trunks. There's a little less than ten thousand dollars worth of costumes in the trunks. There isn't a costumer in any of the large cities that hasn't contributed some of his best work. I shall have to caution them about handling that small trunk, for there are a number of crowns and a large quantity of stage jewels in it, and they are rather tender. Tra-la-la, Major. When I tell them you are willing to pay them in advance, they will call you an angel,—I know they will."

After the Colonel's departure, the Major sat down and studied his contract attentively. He had read it twice from beginning to end, when the Colonel reappeared.

"Say, Colonel," cried the Major, "is it safe to pay out all this money before they do any work? I've been figuring up. There are six folks in the company, and if you paid them fifty dollars apiece, you were fifty dollars short."

"Oh, that's all right," said the Colonel. "I paid that out of my own pocket. I didn't think it worth while to bother you again for so small a sum. Actors are careless, happy people. They live in the present with no thought of the morrow. I don't believe they realize that you — I mean we — have given them a cent."

"What's that?" cried the Major.

"Oh, I mean — that is — not a cent more than I — I mean we — will owe them at the end of the first week. Don't you understand? Don't worry, Major, it'll all come back and you'll get your own private expenses, besides."

"Yaas, you told me that before," said the Major. What are they doin' now that they've got the money?"

"Oh, they're dressing. If won't take them long. It's a burlesque, you know."

"I've been lookin' over this 'ere contract again," said the Major, "and while we're waitin', I guess we can't use up the time any better than by considerin' some of the pints. Let's look it over together."

The Colonel took the document: "If you will overlook some of the provisions in this contract, I think you will find that the others are all right."

The Major grasped the contract, and, pointing to a certain line in it, exclaimed: "How's this? One hundred and fifty dollars a week for your salary?"

"My dear Major, you don't seem to understand. I put that in the contract as a mere legal form — a convincing proof to the public, whose servants we are, and to the company, whose masters we mean to be, of the solidity of our firm — don't you understand? No cheap concern could pay its senior partner one hundred and fifty dollars a week."

"Not if anybody else was expected to get anything," retorted the Major, "but who pays this hundred and fifty dollars — me?"

The Major's questions were becoming too numerous and required too explicit answers; but the Colonel had gone too far to relinquish his position of vantage. He must disarm his partner's suspicions:

"Certainly, not, dear Major; the company—the concern — don't you see?"

The Major nodded: "Well, that's different from what I s'posed, but I can't understand how it is that you're to get two-thirds of the profits."

The Colonel tapped the Major on the back in the most

friendly manner : "Why, Leander, you get just the same; you get two-thirds, too. Besides, you handle all the money. I put that in just to let my brother managers see that I am not breaking the rules of the Managers' Union. You see, most managers are very much opposed to outsiders coming in for any of the profits, and so a liberal manager like me has to veil his intentions, to have the contract legal, and then do as much better by himself as the interests of others will allow. Don't you understand?"

The Major seemed to be only half convinced : "How are you goin' to pay all the bills in New York if I have all the money with me?"

"But you don't want it all the time, do you?" cried the Colonel. "When you have had it long enough, you send it home, and I bank it here in New York. As I pay all the bills, of course the money is more handy to me than to you. You see, you send it all here except what you must have for moving the company, and then you won't get nervous about being robbed. Besides, it looks so much more solid to have all the money in one place."

The Major persisted : "But when do I draw out my five thousand?"

"Immediately, my dear boy, immediately!"

"But who do I get it from?"

"You see," said the Colonel, "you send it to me; then I audit it, and send it right back. Don't you understand?"

The Major, if not suspicious, was shrewd : "How's this : No money to be drawn from such deposits in New York until the end of the season. How can I get any of the five thousand the first week? That's an oversight! That's bad for Leander!"

"Not at all!" cried the Colonel. "Haven't you any confidence in me, Major? Do you suppose, I'm going to run away and leave our money in the bank? I shall drop down on you quite frequently and bring money with me."

For a moment the Major seemed resigned: "Well, I s'pose it'll come out all right." Then something caught his eye: "By thunder! I can't stand this, no sirree! I didn't promise to put in two thousand dollars more—not a cent more 'til I get some out. Let's see—five thousand four hundred and twenty-five dollars put in, and nothing but that little piece of paper to show for it!"

The Colonel drew himself up with a most dignified manner: Mr. Leander Thoroughbrace, you forget—I can't."

"Can't what?" asked the Major. "What's struck yer?"

"My business honor is pledged to the payment of what you have invested so far—and more. I mean, as much more as you may invest of your own free will. Of course, it's a sell on the company, but it makes us solider than ever. You know, managers always show such contracts as this to their companies, and it makes confidence all around."

Mr. Thoroughbrace gave vent to a loud guffaw: "And I don't put the money in at all! That's a good joke on 'em, I swan!"

The Colonel felt that he had, at last, won a complete victory. "We call it a gag," he remarked; "actors like them."

The Major entered into the spirit of the occasion: "Oh, I know them actors are a pretty smart set, but we managers have to get the best of 'em now and then, don't we, Hix?"

"That's it exactly, Major; we have to live."

The battle of wits was not over.

"What's this thirty-three and a third per cent comin' to me?" cried the Major. "You get sixty-six and two-thirds. I ain't much at figurin', but I reckon that's twice as much."

"You can't get but three thirds in a whole one," the Colonel acknowledged.

"But you said we got the same."

"Ah!" cried the Colonel, "I see what troubles you. You forget the capital. I shall be surprised if the money you put in and your one-third don't amount to much more than my two-thirds—I shall, really, Major. If we get along well under this contract for the season, I don't see why we can't be life partners and make the names of Hix and Thoroughbrace synonymous with all that's excellent in dramatic art. Do you know, Leander, you're the picture of Henry Irving, the great London manager."

Mr. Thoroughbrace looked up with a quizzical smile on his face: "Has he got as much money in the business as I have?"

"A little more, but he has been in a longer time. When you have been in as long as he has, you —"

Mr. Thoroughbrace found another cause for complaint: "What's this extra dollar a day for you?"

"Oh, extra expenses—telephone charges—I shall talk to you every day—and cash short in making change—there's a good many ways of losing money on the road."

"But that man of yours said he never knew anybody to lose money on the road."

"Oh, he meant big money. What's a dollar a day, anyway? I'll strike that provision out if you say so, but it doesn't seem fair that I should pay the running expenses out of my own pocket."

"Well, that's so," the Major replied. "It's a small matter, anyway. I s'pose it's all right. Let it go as it is."

Again the Colonel placed his hand on the Major's shoulder in the most friendly manner: "Of course, it's all right, Major. There isn't a provision in that contract that I haven't carefully considered to see how it would affect me and how it would affect you. But the company's coming. They are all ready for rehearsal. Will you have

a footlight chair, Major, or a seat in a box, or will you go down in the body of the house and be the audience?"

"Where you goin' to be?"

"As stage manager," said the Colonel, "my proper place is right here."

"Well, I'll stay right here, too. I mean to get as near to you as I can, for I guess that's the quickest way to learn the business."

CHAPTER XVII

"ALLURIO AND ADELINA"

As the members of the company passed in review, the Colonel turned to Mr. Thoroughbrace and exclaimed :

"Aren't these costumes magnificent? Did you ever see anything finer? Of course, they will look much better at night when the lights are turned on."

"What there is of 'em seems to be pretty good," said the Major. "The company that I took out wore their street clothes—it was that kind of a play—of course, it wasn't like this."

"My dear Major, there never was a play like this before." He opened the prompt book. "It is entitled Allurio and Adelina; or, The Rival Kings. It is a passionate romance of love in Farther India, hitherto suppressed out of a profound regard for the public welfare. Now, ladies and gentlemen, kindly disperse and keep a sharp ear out for your cues."

As soon as they were gone, he clapped his hands three times: "All ready now! Curtain's up!" He turned to Thoroughbrace:

"Now, Major, before the actors come on, I'm going to describe the scene to you. It represents the plains of Farther India, and the ditto of Hither India. The boundary line of both kingdoms is indicated by a piece of white tape. Whatever occurs on this tape is part of the play. The peaks of the Himalayas, Andes, Rocky Mountains, and the Blue Ridge cross each other at right angles, the obliquity being quite acute, and seen reaching far into the distance, and a little farther. Real Jubilee singers are seen picking cotton on the banks of the St. Lawrence, on

the right, while a chorus of live Indians from the pickle groves of Florida is at the left. Both races are picking quarrels as the curtain rises."

"Right here, Major, the orchestra plays an Indian march. You know how they go, Major, hump-ty, tump-ty, hump-ty, tump-ty. The mixed chorus repeats the burden with lifting effect, then carry it off, leaving the stage in darkness."

"Who's that?" cried Mr. Thoroughbrace, as one of the kings made his appearance.

"That's King Meambrino, the thirty-third. Now listen, Major."

Meambrino "Twice thirty Indian summers have rolled by
Since from my crib I stept, a stripling I
I've heard it said, that I, when I was born,
Unlike a peasant's child, had nothing on.
A draught blew in beneath my nursery door,
I quinine took, but still I shook and swore.
My infant hopes were chilled, and blighted,
too;
At all the clubs, in time I slighted grew.
Within my palace walls I dine and sup—
The people say, I'm pampered and fed up—
Until in plumpness I resemblance show
To Jumbo more than King of Ram Jam Ho!
Between my bed, and throne, and dining
table,
I draw out an existence mis-er-able!
With one fair daughter—my sweet Adelina—
There's not a swell in India hasn't seen her,
One thing alone a father's joy has nettled,
I wish to see her comfortably settled.
If he should die, her hand will have a bidder
"What's nicer than a rich young Indian
widder?"

"When does he stop?" asked the Major.

"Oh, he's guaranteed for twelve hours," said the Colonel; "Waterbury stem-winder. But list, he speaks again."

Meambrino "My native land, ah! here's the bound'ry mark,

This tape, and O. N. T. thread is made by
Clark."

"You will notice said the Colonel, "that the boundary line between the two kingdoms is indicated by a piece of white tape, pinned to the carpet. You see you can go from one kingdom to the other without meeting a custom house, or any red tape."

"Do you get anything for advertising the feller that makes that thread?"

"No, Major, not yet, but I'll bill it up to him after we've been on the road a while. Go ahead, Steele."

Meambrino "There dwells (pointing) the Royal Rajah
Rumptifoozle, aye,

A lean and hungry Rajah, with an eye
Upon my broad possessions, while I own
That mine, on his, with envy now are thrown.
I would have his as well as mine—and he
Would add my land to his ter-ri-to-ree!
I am not well—I have a palpitation,
War comes apace—I feel an agitation—
I'll abdicate, and take a foreign mission;
Oh, no, I won't, I'll get a good physician!"

"There's a song comes in here, Major, in which his Royal Majesty expresses his intention of securing the services of a first-class physician. This burlesque was written before the advent of X rays and radium, and the chances are that his Majesty will pay his money and die in the attempt." The Colonel pointed:

"Now, Major, watch the fellow who is coming in from the opposite side of the stage, the Rajah Rumptifoozle. The Rajah doesn't recognize King Meambrino, and the latter, with true kingly courtesy, waits until the Rajah, who is Waltham made, runs down. He suspects a snub, but is too much of a gentleman to call attention to it."

Rumptifoozle "Now is the winter of our discontent,
For foul is fair, and coal's gone up a cent.
With int'rest 65 per cent, you see
Labor and Capital never can agree.
The Philippines will not be made a state
Until the Filipinos emigrate."

"Allow me to explain, Major. Right here, the Rajah, overcome by his emotions, blows his nose. It is a stage tradition that, when an actor does so, the musician who plays the trombone shall accentuate the act by coming in with him. It will be all right at night. Now, come on, Steele."

Meambrino "Pray silence in the court; that dreadful
knell
Was Freedom's shriek when Kosciusko fell.
Another blow, and I return it square—"

Rumptifoozle "King Ram Jam Ho, are you really there?"

Meambrino "I am, and can Jam you, false caitiff—see"

Rumptifoozle "I can afford base wretch, to laugh at
thee."

Meambrino "I know — that's all you can afford to do
— Do not forget, I hold your I. O. U."

Rumptifoozle "My poverty and not my will consents —
So I must pocket Ram Jam's insolence.
Oh! with my eye your nose I'd like to hit!"

Meambrino "Oh! with my voice your ear I'd like to
split!"

Rumptifoozle "Oh! with my scorn I'd like to break your
back!"

Meambrino "Oh! with my hate I'd like your head to crack!"

Rumptifoozle "Ye gods! now to the scratch my toe I'll bring!"

Meambrino "Ye stars! how I will make that dude's head ring!"

"Right here, Major, having exhausted spoken language, they indulge in a vocal duet. They have good voices, so they say, and I hope they will do it well."

Rumptifoozle "Pickles, and eels, and leather-headed quails,

Turtles, and snails, and paper water pails,

Big gorillas and undigested clams,

I am chock full of unexploded damns!"

"Did you ever see Othello, Major? Right here, the Rajah rushes off stage *a la* Salvini."

"I thought they was goin' to fight," said the Major. "I've seen such fellers afore — one is afraid and t'other dassent."

Meambrino "I pity and despise you, Rumptifoozle — well —

And now to dynamite your citadel."

"Now, look sharp, Major. Adelina, Meambrino's daughter, comes in now. She has a song first, entitled: He Said He Loved Me."

"Did she pick out the name of the song?" asked the Major.

"Why, no. What makes you ask that question?"

"Well, I just remembered them letters and telegrams, and I thought it might be a hit on you."

Adelina "Allurio! oh, tell me where thou art!

Allurio! the monarch of my heart,

And likewise heir apparent to the throne

Of Rajah Rumptifoozle — who has shown



FAL

ALLURIO AND ADELINA

Himself to be a dire bitter foe.

He comes! oh, foolish heart, why flutter so?"

As Prince Allurio entered, the Major asked: "Who's that young feller, Hix?"

"Why, that's Miss Winton. You met her at my office yesterday."

"Well, by George! I wouldn't have believed that a woman could fix herself up to look so much like a man. How do they do it?"

"It is art, Major, art. He is going to make up to the Princess now."

Allurio "Here 'tis the east, and Juliet's the sun."

Adelina "My dear, were I at all inclined to pun,
Which I am not, as you're aware, I'd say
It isn't July yet, it's only May."

Allurio "Don't open, love, the grave of aged jokes;
Leave that to minstrels and the circus folks.
Sweet May, the month when a young man's fancy,
E'en the street newsboy yearns to be with
Nancy —

Turns lightly, Tennyson observes, to love —
By Jove, or say to make the rhyme, by Juv —
I swear I love thee and thou must be mine."

Adelina "The course of true love, aye, was serpentine —
Remember that our parents —

Allurio "Name them not,
Or see Allurio die upon the spot.
Fathers have flinty hearts — let us away —
The curfew tolls the knell of parting day."

"There's some more music here, Major. The Prince and Princess sing it together."

"Oh, I can see what's comin'. They're going to do their courtin' to music."

"During the song, Major, they confess their mutual

affection and, when they part, agree to be married in the morning, despite the objections of their parents. The Prince goes to prepare his trousseau, and Adelina begins to weep."

"Oh, that's nat'ral," said the Major. "Women are great on cryin'. They boo-hoo when they're sad, and when they're mad, and when they're glad."

"Now, Major, here comes a great scene. Jeannette, the peasant enters, accompanied by a large body of peasants. It will be different at night. We shall have to hire some supes."

"Soups?" cried the Major. "Shall I have to feed them every night?"

"Yes," said the Colonel, "that's part of the business — fifty cents apiece."

"Too much," said the Major; "I can buy the things and make it cheaper than that myself."

Jeannette "In tears, sweet maid?"

Adelina "The prospects are not pleasant,
Leave me alone!"

Jeannette "You think I'm but a peasant,
But I am not — your inmost thoughts I know,
You are in love (Adelina starts) with Prince
Allurio."

Adelina "The King, my pa, you know, in a refusal
For once, at least, will join with Rumptifoozle."

"Right here, Major, the Princess speaks to the peasants. They are not here — you will have to imagine it."

"Oh," said the Major, "I have heard about a great many things to-night that I haven't seen."

Adelina "Loved ones, it breaks my heart to think I
am so soon to leave you."

Jeannette "Yes, the paralyzing idea of it has stamped
wrinkles upon my youthful brow. But I am

a woman, and can suffer and be silent.
Where do you think of settling?"

Adelina "Do not — do not — do not ask me."

Jeannette "I won't. (Turning to peasants)

There is something on her mind that bespeaks me evil.

(To Adelina) Has Allurio deceived thee?"

"Perhaps you have noticed, Major," said the Colonel, "that there's quite a break in the rhyme. I'll have it fixed up by to-morrow. Dodd has written poetry. The peasants think that Allurio has deceived the Princess. They are all armed with scissors, which they draw and cry for vengeance. Go on, Miss Cholmondeley."

Adelina "No, no, no, no, but pray leave me, and I will do the same."

Colonel Hix explained: "The peasants go up various mountain paths. It will be different at night. Jeannette, the peasant, retires within herself, which means up stage, and the Princess, overcome by her emotions, goes to the royal kitchen for a cup of tea. That's your cue to come forward, Miss Dumaresque."

Jeannette (Taking one step to the footlights)

"Allurio, how could you treat me so,
And to my charms how could you hardened grow?

I'll poison take (hunts for bottle); I'm sure I've
lived too long,

But like the swan, I'll sing my dying song."

"Mr. Thoroughbrace," said the Colonel, "you will now hear what you never did before, the song of a dying swan. It is full of slumberous melancholy."

Mr. Thoroughbrace looked around: "Where's the swan?"

Colonel Hix pointed to Jeannette: "She's playing it."

"Miss Dumaresque," said the Colonel, as the young lady started to sing the song without accompaniment ; "this is a reading rehearsal, not a singing one. Just skim it through."

Jeannette (Reads)

Oh, come and see a maiden die
Of unrequited passion,
From hemlock bark as strong as lye,
In true Socratic fashion.

CHORUS

For I'm an unloved maiden ;
Boo-hoo ! Boo-hoo !
Deprived of my dearest love,
With sorrow I'm overladen,
So I'm going to go above.
I am in love without a beau,
I'll die and be cremated ;
My rival's tongue no taunts shall know,
Nor smile show he's elated. *Chorus*
If, in a grave, my form is laid,
He'll come, and see, and "take on" ;
He'll flowers bring, which soon will fade,
But perfume sweet will make on. *Chorus*

At the close of song, Jeannette drinks from bottle. She rises, shakes, shivers, reels, totters up stage, and disappears behind a tree.

"That's her death song, Major," said the Colonel.

"Is that the last of her ?" asked Mr. Thoroughbrace.

"No, she is saved," replied the Colonel.

"How ?"

"By a fortunate mistake of the property man. Look, Major, here comes the heavy villain, Count Lobster-clawski."

Count Lobsterclawski "Yes, 'tis the village — there's the pump (pointing to Thoroughbrace) and the old church spire! Ah, me! What feelings, and particularly indescribable and unutterable sensations, get over me. Alas! I am penniless. I must go and cash a check at the village bank."

"Where's he gone?" asked the Major.

"Oh, he'll come back," was the reply. "You see, the Prince is on again."

Allurio "Ha! I did not believe these tiny hands would ever become steeped in aniline — of crime. But what could I do? The wedding ring was two dollars and I had it not. We were crossing a mountain gorge together. No one was by. A short struggle and all was over — that is to say — he was all over. 'Tis strange, but ever since I have felt most uncomfortable. Perhaps 'tis conscience. If so, it must be smothered. Ah, as the night editor says, how true it is, in the words of the poet — it is impossible to drown the screams of a guilty and blood-stained breast."

The Colonel thought it essential to explain to his partner: "The Prince is overcome by his feelings and he goes out to get a bracer. This scene is full of action, Major. Here comes the Princess again."

Adelina "Oh, horror!" (She screams and faints.)

Count Lobsterclawski enters.

"He's got back again," said Mr. Thoroughbrace.

"Oh, yes," assented the Colonel. "He left his check to be cashed."

Count Lobsterclawski "The sight of these well-known spots recalls to my recollection bitter quinine memories of the past. Every point in the picture produces a pang. How can I calmly view those crumbling spires without reflecting upon the decayed beauty of my lost one? And, does not that thick pump remind me of my own heartless

self? Existence is a burden. I will put an end to worldly aspirations. I have read Bang's Genial Idiot, but it has failed to chase the gloomy cloud from my brow. Yon mountain top reminds me of the moments and the marbles of my youthful innocence. I will ascend it, and when I have reached its snow-clad summit, I will revenge myself upon the world and my fellow-men — by turning around and coming down again."

"He doesn't seem to see the girl," remarked Mr. Thoroughbrace.

"Oh, yes," said the Colonel; "he is about to put his terrible threat into execution when he discovers her prostrate form."

Count Lobsterclawski "What's this — a girl? — and of the female sex?"

Adelina "Where am I? Where am I?"

"Sit up! Sit up!" cried the Colonel; "there's a gentleman present."

Count Lobsterclawski "Ha! Ah! Hi-yi! Halloo!"

Adelina "Say, who are you?" (Rubbing her eyes.)

Count Lobsterclawski "I am — oh, heavens! It is she!"

The Colonel turned to the Major: "Here's where Mr. Dangerfield gives his great imitation of Henry Irving. I think I've made two great strikes. You look like Irving, and Dangerfield acts like him."

Count Lobsterclawski "Adelina, further evasion would be preposterous. Attempted concealment, considering my size, would be ridiculous. Have you any property in your own right?"

Adelina "Yes, a snug little fortune."

Count Lobsterclawski "Then I am your long lost father. Come to a father's arms — whose heart is seared and desolate. If I had not wedded young, you would not be so old. Come, and do not tear my heartstrings any longer."

Adelina "Not i this orphan knows herself. I never had a father — and, what's more, he is now on his own territory in India. But, however, for-a hug's sake, embrace me."

The Colonel was afraid the Major would get mixed up: "Adelina rushes into the Count's arms. Just then Allurio comes in and perceives the embrace, but does not see the face of the Count, whom he supposes is dead at the bottom of the gorge."

Allurio "What do I see? Oh, faithless one!"

Adelina "Good gracious!"

The Colonel thought more explanation was necessary: "It is the same old story, Major. The Princess has two lovers and she runs off and leaves them to fight it out."

Allurio "Varlet, draw-er!"

Count Lobsterclawski (Regarding Allurio attentively, then speaking *sotto voce*) "It cannot be—and yet! But no — impossible — because—or ever — why not—just so — precisely — nevertheless it could scarcely be—(Aloud) My murderer! Oh, horror!"

Allurio "My victim! I am lost! lost!"

"Major, Allurio is down on his luck. Count Lobsterclawski is willing to give him a breathing spell before killing him, and the author has very kindly inserted here a song for the Count, in which he tells what is going on in Russia, and what a bad man he is. Mr. Dangerfield, will you oblige the Major by reading the words of your song?"

Count Lobsterclawski

I left my native land,

'Twas the wish of the Czar, Czar, Czar,

To find a welcome grand

From a Princess's pa, pa, pa.

A patriot I am,

For I'm called a Nihi-list, list, list;

Our freedom is a sham
And your aid we have missed, missed, missed.

CHORUS

Petrovsky, Oskaloffsky, and Nevereffsky,
To Siberia were sent ;
Kitoffsky, Rubomoffsky, and Wallereffsky,
In a dungeon cell were pent ;
Milarodovitch and Tetrovitch,
Kostolovitch and Melikovitch,
Pameltschikoff and Rostomaroff
They imprisoned, exiled, or swung them off ;
But when one is gone,
He never is missed,
For we add two more
To the Nihi-list !

"That will do, Mr. Dangerfield. I don't think the audience will allow you to sing more than one stanza."

"I don't think they'll allow him to get half through it," and the Major chuckled.

Count Lobsterclawski "May my heaviest hatred, my most ponderous detestation, my most searching contempt, my most withering ridicule, my sarcastic-est, double-jointed sneers light on this horrible land on which I now place my Number 14 foreign foot. Ever since I left the blue skies of my beloved Russia—the military home of my adoption—where the grape-vine dances in the sunlight of the sapphire sea, and the wash-leather goat bounds along the rocky promontory, overlooking the burning lava of the volcanic agency to which my respected old dad is secretary—ever since, I say, I bade farewell to the beautiful clime where the dusky natives open their bivalvulous mouths without knives, and shrink into their shells at the merest mention of this frigid clime—ever since, I

say, I departed from the midst of that distant people — ever since I came to shiver in this torrid country — ever since, I say, I have been in this vile town of Seringapatam, I have been racked with a small million of emotions (scratches) and I find it exceedingly difficult to catch them. They flee when one pursueth. But why? Ha! Ha!! Why? That's the question."

Allurio "I give it up."

"Right here, Major, musketry firing and cheers are heard off stage. It will be different at night. Allurio, you and Lobsterclawski may retire behind two trees, but keep an eye on the proceedings. Of course, it is all imaginative, Major. They look off stage and see Meambrino's army and Rumptifoozle's forces approaching from opposite directions. They are supposed to meet upon the stage, and the battle begins. The composer has written some highly descriptive battle music. In it, you can hear the ping of the bullets, the clashing of swords, and the roll of drums. The house will just rise to it. Now, Major, the fight is going on. Ha! Ha!! Meambrino has the best of it. Now, Rumptifoozle has the best of it! Now, they both have the best of it! Now, they are both defeated! Now, they are both victorious!"

Mr. Thoroughbrace became excited and, rising from his chair, started up stage to take part in the conflict.

"Go back!" cried the Colonel. "They come this way!"

Enter Meambrino, with Adelina on his arm, followed by his army, and Rumptifoozle, followed by his army. They take opposite sides of the stage, with Jeannette and peasants at the back near flat. Rumptifoozle addresses his soldiers:

Rumptifoozle "Are you ready? Treat your foes with scorn —"

Meambrino "Ha! By the pricking of my Indian corn
There's something comes this way. Draw!"

Adelina "Stay, father, stay!" (kneeling)

Meambrino "What now, my child?"

Adelina "Dear father, I entreat you, draw it mild."

Allurio emerges from behind tree as Rumptifoozle addresses his army.

Rumptifoozle "Prepare to charge!"

Allurio throws himself upon his knees before his father.

Rumptifoozle "To charge! (Sees Allurio) Halloo, young man."

Allurio "Dear father, charge as little as you can."

Meambrino (To *Adelina*) "What means this conduct, girl?"

Rumptifoozle (To *Allurio*) "Young man, how now?"

Allurio "Speak, *Adelina*, love—"

Adelina "What, disclose our vow?"

Pardon us, fathers,—we are married."

Count Lobsterclawski (Coming forward) "I forbid the bans."

Rumptifoozle and Meambrino "Seize the slave and bind him feet and hands!"

"When they're acting," said the Colonel, "they seize the Count and bind him."

"I guess he's bound up tight enough," remarked the Major. "I think that hundred dollars will hold him."

Allurio (To *Meambrino*) "Recall your words! (To *Rumptifoozle*) Postpone this battle, do!"

Rumptifoozle "I'll vengeance have! (To *Meambrino*) Wreak all of it on you."

Allurio "You are both brutes! Uncivilized, they'd call—"

Meambrino "Such acts—'tis true—we are barbarians all."

Adelina "My royal pa, can you forgive?"

Meambrino "Of course, I can.

And what does Rumpy say?"

Rumptifoozle "I am your man."

Meambrino "My children, now, my blessing I expand —"

Rumptifoozle "For my son's sake, old boy, come take my hand."

Meambrino "There won't in India dwell a happier pa
Than Meambrino —"

Rumptifoozle "You forget the Rajah."

Allurio "Oh, what a life of heavenly bliss in view —"

Adelina "May ev'ry Indian lover prove as true."

"Right here, Major," said Colonel Hix, "the Count steps forward and embraces Jeannette. I wrote this in myself, last night."

"How can he hug her," asked the Major, "if his arms are tied?"

"He is supposed to break them," said the Colonel. "Lovers always break the bonds that bind."

Jeannette "You naughty thing! You're mean as you can be!"

Count "Say, what's the harm, when all the folks can see?"

Adelina "Our once fierce parents at each other grin —"

Allurio "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

No lot in life such perfect joy e'er brings—

Meambrino "As being loving fathers—

Rumptifoozle "Rival Kings!"

"Is that the end on it?" cried the Major.

"Pretty near," said the Colonel. "The whole company sings a song, and dances, and while that's going on, the curtain falls.

"Very good, ladies and gentlemen," he said, turning to the company, "very good, indeed, for a first rehearsal. I'll give you two days in which to learn your parts. Day after to-morrow, call at my office and I'll have your music ready for you, and the next morning, at half past ten, sharp, we'll have our first rehearsal with the orchestra.

"Say, Major, I am tired and hungry. Let's go where we did yesterday and get a good dinner."

"No, thank you," said the Major. "I found a place this morning where I got mush and milk — I didn't expect cream — and beefsteak and taters for a quarter of a dollar, and I am goin' to stick to that restorator as long as I stay in town. Those fancy things that you eat may do for a city man, but I was born and brought up in the country, and I must have somethin' substantial."

"Well, we'll walk along together," said the Colonel.

The members of the company had gone to their dressing-rooms to put on street attire.

When they reached the street, the Colonel said: "What do you think of the piece, Major?"

"Well, the costumes are good — what there is of 'em. When we get up to Snickersville, I'm afeard the Ebenezer Society will want to stop the show. I want to play there two nights just to see what old Dalton and his crowd will try to do. I don't know much about music, so my opinion ain't worth much on that subject."

"That's all right," said the Colonel, "but what do you think of the piece — the language, I mean?"

"Well, I s'pose," said the Major, "you want me to tell you just what I think."

"Yes, Major, that's just what I wish you to do — tell me just what you think."

The Major stopped, looked the Colonel squarely in the

face, and then said : “ Well, then, I’ll tell yer just what I think. In my opinion, it’s the confoundedest mess of nonsense—the biggest one I ever heerd, and if the actors don’t get eggs and cabbages instead of bokays, then my name ain’t Leander Thoroughbrace.”

CHAPTER XVIII

SNICKERSVILLE, N. H.

SNICKERSVILLE, New Hampshire, is nestled within a circlet of foothills. Miles beyond to the northward, the giant mountains rise in their grandeur. In the winter, their summits are snow-crowned, and the icy blasts roar about them and beat down upon them. In the summer, their tops are enveloped in a blue haze which rises into the empyrean, then on and on, until it melts into the infinite.

The level plain upon which the town was built was about three miles long and two miles wide. It boasted no river, but those of its inhabitants who enjoyed fishing found many brooks in which to cast a fly, with the hope of landing one of its highly-prized denizens — a brook trout.

The town was a prosperous farming community. Every house in it was painted and blinded. A former resident, long since gone to his punishment, had refused to paint his house, although called upon to do so several times by the Village Improvement Society. The way of the transgressor is hard. One dark night the unpainted house went up in smoke, and as the owner thereof had failed to insure his property — having arrived at the allotted age of three score years and ten — he was obliged to pass the remainder of his days in the poorhouse. He lived to the age of ninety-two, and on his deathbed dictated a letter of thanks to the unknown persons who had set fire to his house, expressing his gratitude to them for their kindly foresight in providing for him in his old age.

There was no railroad station or post-office in Snickers-

ville. The engineers, who laid out the route for the railroad, carried it over an elevation some fifty feet higher than the town level, and the railroad company refused to build a station, as it could not be reached except by means of a long flight of steps, and there was no opportunity for the receipt or delivery of freight. So the Snickersvillians were obliged to go to the southern end of the town, which adjoined Willoughby, and there the railway officials had located a station, and the United States had established a post-office, which answered very well the needs of both places.

Snickersville was a moral town. It contained but one religious edifice, which was known as the Union Church. Its pastor was the Rev. Franklin Merrill, who had been graduated from college but a short time when he assumed the pastorate. He was a young man of strong humanitarian instincts, but the diversity of religious tenets, held by the members of his flock, obliged him to avoid controversial texts, and to select as topics of his discourses, those subjects upon which there was an approximation to unanimity of opinion.

One of the pillars of the church was Deacon Solomon Dalton. He was the originator and had been president of the Ebenezer Reform Association since its organization. By its energetic efforts, liquor saloons had been banished from the town. This led to the closing of the hotel, for a hotel without liquor is like a ship without sails.

There was a restaurant in the town, kept by a man who called himself Riccadonna. When a sign, bearing his name in large letters, was placed over his doorway, he was speedily visited by a committee of the Ebenezer Society, and called upon to explain the meaning of the word. He succeeded in convincing his visitors that there was nothing improper or impious in the name. But Deacon Solomon

never went by the place without pulling his hat down over his eyes, and his wife's sister, Miss Abigail March, a spinster of forty, more or less, probably more, who was the Deacon's housekeeper, declared it was a shame that a "furrin" name like that should stare decent people in the face when they went to church.

The farmers and their wives, who formed nearly the entire population, were an honest, God-fearing people; that is, they feared the God of the future, owing to the fact that the religious views of the parishioners ranged from mild Universalism to acrid Presbyterianism. The Rev. Mr. Merrill preached more about the God of the future than about the Divine Ruler of the present. It is not strange, therefore, that the residents of the little town had a week-day religion of their own, and a Sunday religion provided by the minister. Thus their religion was that of the head, rather than that of the heart, and head religion is apt to be lacking in those most praiseworthy attributes — charitableness and forgiveness.

There was but one store in town — what is called a general store — and Capt. Ezra Milliken, the proprietor, prided himself upon keeping everything, from a needle to a mowing machine. A favorite remark of his was:

"If I hain't got it, I can git it, and if I git it, you'll have it as soon as you want it — and p'raps sooner."

The "Store" was a story and a half building, with a peaked roof. There was a portico about ten feet deep running the full width of the building, supported by four wooden columns. Upon these columns, for fifty years, the boys and men of Snickersville had carved their initials and various emblems, until they resembled, somewhat, a tattooed South Sea Islander, particularly when the course of the storms of fifty winters had taken away every semblance of paint, and the wood beneath was brown with

age. The platform of this portico answered a double purpose. Upon it, the Captain displayed the latest additions to his stock, and it also served for a lounging place for purchasers and for those who came to hear the sea yarns which Captain Ezra liked to tell. One favorite subject of discussion, on the portico, in summer, and around the hot stove in winter, was the story of Jonah and the whale. His religious patrons strongly maintained the actual truth of the story as told in the Bible. But Captain Ezra declared that he'd helped kill more than a hundred whales, and that there wasn't one of them that could have swallowed Stub Dutcher, much less a full-grown man.

The Rev. Mr. Merrill, who had a great liking for a joke, told the Captain one day that he could easily prove his point by bringing a whale up to Snickersville, and let the people see for themselves. From that day the Captain declared that the parson was on his side.

There were two limbs of the law in town, one active and the other passive. The active one was Abel Barnett, and, as there was no lawyer in Willoughby, he did what legal business there was for the two towns. The passive member was John Rodgers, the trial justice, who was dignified by the name of "Squire" and was looked upon as next in the social scale to the clergyman.

The town affairs were administered by three selectmen — Squire Rodgers, Lawyer Barnett, and Deacon Isaac Sprowle. The latter, although coadjutor of Deacon Dalton, rarely agreed with him upon any matter, and had persistently refused to become a member of the Ebenezer Moral Improvement Society. Deacon Dalton had endeavored to oust Deacon Sprowle from his position in the church, but his efforts had been defeated by those whom he called the ungodly, and whom his sister-in-law, Miss March, designated as milk and water Christians.

There was but one politician in the town — Mr. Martin Van Buren Mudge. He had represented the towns of Snickersville and Willoughby in the New Hampshire Legislature. He might have had more influence in town affairs, had it not been for the fact that he was what is known as a ne'er-do-well, and had been sent to the Legislature to save the expense of supporting him at the Town Farm.

The literary feature of Snickersville was a weekly newspaper called *The White Mountain Sun*. Its editor was Mr. J. Austin Donaldson, who parted his name in the middle in print — but was obliged to publicly answer to the name of Jim, for everybody in Snickersville knew old Jim Donaldson, his father, who made money by raising hogs and sent his son to college. Caleb Leeds, the oldest man in town, nigh on to ninety-five, declared that Jim Donaldson's son was named plain Jim Donaldson, and that "that 'ere highfalutin" part of his name must have been given him down to college. Mr. Donaldson's assistant was a young man named Hosea Fogg, who had, at one time, taught the village school, the latter position now being held by a Miss Roxana Rhodes, who had been secured through one of the teachers' agencies, in Boston. Experience had shown the school committee that no person born and bred in the town could successfully cope with the rising generation of Snickersvillians.

Every town has one or more gossips, usually of the female sex, probably because women have more time, and perhaps, inclination, to devote to the profession — for a profession it really is. The gossip is the precursor of the newspaper — oftentimes its contemporary. The newspaper has an editor, but the gossips are edited by Public Opinion. In these days the newspapers, or many of them, are returning to original principles, and are becom-

ing gossips rather than chroniclers of news, or molders and directors of public opinion. Snickersville was unique, in this respect — its gossips — there were four of them — were all men. To be sure, the farmers' wives talked over, among themselves, matters in which they were interested, but the general store and the barber shop were the repositories for those stories which are as essential to the mental life of a country village, as are hay, grain, vegetables, and live stock for its physical support.

The leader among the town gossips was Stub Dutcher. Nobody knew where he got his name, but as he had always answered to it, its origin was immaterial. He had not been blessed by nature, or even fairly well treated, for he was a misshapen hunchback. His head was large, his body small, his eyes long. When he sat down, he was insignificant. When he stood up, his deformity became painfully apparent. When he ran, there was no man, and few horses, in Snickersville that could overtake him. His eyes were bright, his big brain well-stocked with the day's doings, and he had a retentive memory which usually brought defeat to his adversaries in argument. His tongue was glib — but that was necessary, for was he not Snickersville's gossip *par excellence*?

The second in rank, though far behind Stub in ability, was Jake Clemson, the village barber. His specialty was funny stories, and the pangs caused by dull razors were perceptibly softened by the sharp points of the stories which he told to his prostrate and non-resisting patrons.

The third in line was Bat Mulvey. He was proud of three things: First, he was an Irishman by descent; second, he was an American by birth; third, he was, as he had often remarked, "the only man in Snickersville who had the pluck to walk three miles to Willoughby to get a drink of whiskey." His christian name was Bar-

tholomew, but it had been found too long for constant use, and by general consent had been abbreviated to one syllable. Bat was very patriotic, and when the question of nationality came up in discussion, he always declared himself to be an American Irishman — or, as he often tersely put it, “the blood of one and the bone of the other.”

The fourth member of the quadrilateral was Jefferson Smith, a colored farm-hand, who worked for Deacon Sprowle. He had been a waiter in a Boston hotel, but his lungs were weak, and his physician had advised him to go into the country, on high land, if he wished to prolong his life. Snickersville lay in a valley, and Jeff's favorite exercise, in order to follow his Doctor's advice, was walking on the railroad track, and climbing the hills which encircled the town.

Speaking of physicians, Snickersville possessed one in the person of Dr. Daniel Danby. He belonged to the old school, and professed a profound contempt for new-fangled notions. A summer boarder having asked him, on one occasion, what he gave his patients, he replied : “What I have the most of.”

The farmers of the town, and they represented nearly the whole of the male population, were, as a rule, a thrifty, prosperous set. They had “tickled the ground with a hoe,” and it had yielded abundantly ; the surplus would have done them little good, however, had it not been for the fact that within a radius of ten miles were two manufacturing cities, where they found a good market for it.

Old Caleb Leeds, nearly ninety-five, had retired with a competency, for these parts, at eighty. No more financially independent men could be found in the old Granite State than David Winkle, Amri Struthers, Jonathan Wither-spoon, Ebenezer Stark, and Jason White.

Not all of them, however, had laid by money for support in their old age. Many had to be satisfied with a bare living, and Timothy Atwood found it impossible to make even that.

The latest comer, Leander Thoroughbrace, was not a farmer. There was a good bit of land attached to the house which he had purchased, but he did not cultivate it. He paid his bills promptly, always seemed to have plenty of money, and the town assessors found it impossible to agree upon the sum on which to tax him. When they "marked," as is the custom in doubtful cases, the extremes were ten thousand and fifty thousand, and the mean thirty thousand dollars. Mr. Thoroughbrace had not as yet been taxed, but the assessors decided to assess him on thirty thousand and see what he would say. If he did not object, they would then know that they had not put it high enough.

The stability and reputation of a country town are, undoubtedly, founded upon the labor and character of its hard-handed farmers, and their hard-working wives; but the life of such a place is dependent, to a great extent, upon its young men and young women. As in hundreds of other New England towns, the young men of marriageable age had flocked to the cities, leaving but few gallants in proportion to the comparatively large number of attractive young ladies, whose individual charms will be more fully descanted upon later. In fact, Tom Appleby, Plummer Gifford, Eben Wilkes, and Paul Danby constituted the Snickersville matrimonial reserve; of these, Paul Danby, the doctor's son, stood highest in the social scale. It was allowed on all sides, that Deacon Sprowle's daughter, Betsey, was most likely to be the future Mrs. Paul Danby.

One important member of the community has been

overlooked, in the person of Mr. Enoch Scales, the town constable and mail-carrier. He was an old bachelor of forty-five. His invalid sister, Matilda, when she was not a victim of rheumatism, to use his own words, "managed to git 'round and do the housework in time to go to bed, if she wasn't taken down afore she got through." But he declared that he did all the chores, and didn't want "no other woman 'round the house, no way."

It may seem invidious to mention here only a few of the pretty girls who lived in Snickersville, but in depicting life in that town, those few cannot, and will not, be overlooked.

Stub Dutcher and the other male gossips had decided that Plum Gifford and Mandy Harkins would surely make a match of it, and as Jake Clemson expressed it, "Tom Appleby was shinin' up to Sally Winkle, pretty considerable."

Tom Appleby had been engaged to one of Jonathan Witherspoon's daughters, but as he could not tell which one it was, the match had been broken off. The fact was, Maria Witherspoon, universally called "Ri," and her sister Tryphena, whose christian appellation, given in honor of a great grandmother, was abbreviated to "Tri," were so nearly alike in personal appearance, that Tom could not be blamed for certain lapses in identification. The climax came, when having asked Ri, as he supposed, to go to the circus with him, he found upon their return home, that Ri was indisposed and that he had been playing the agreeable to her sister Tri. He went to the Witherspoon house no more. He told Jake Clemson that "he was no Mormon, and he'd be hanged before he'd marry a girl that he couldn't pick out in a crowd."

Col. J. Orlando Hix's Cosmopolitan Corinthian Bur-

lesque Company finished its rehearsals and started on its fondly expected-to-be-triumphant tour of one night stands. "One night at a time is enough for any town," said Colonel Hix. "If they want you to come back, they'll let you know it, and if they have got enough of you, you'd better keep away." In one case only did he depart from this plan. At Mr. Thoroughbrace's urgent solicitation, he consented to book the show for two performances at the Snickersville Town Hall, under the local management of Mr. Robert Brady.

The printing was the finest that New York's unequalled facilities could supply. A week before the show appeared in a town, the eye was attracted, almost fascinated, by the lithographs, posters, hangers, and stands of bills, all of which announced that the Cosmopolitan Corinthian Burlesque Troupe was coming. No circus had ever been billed more magnificently or more effectively. The houses were crowded at each performance. If the audiences went away dissatisfied with the play or the people, they, at least, could console themselves with the reflection that they had had an opportunity to look at the printing, for a week before the show came, and for some time afterward. If the sights of the placards aroused bitter memories, it was the next company that would suffer, and not Colonel Hix's.

Professionally, business manager Leander Thoroughbrace was in an exalted condition, but financially he was depressed. Colonel Hix had insisted upon remaining in New York, claiming that he must stay there in order to attend to the booking. Mr. Dodd, acting under instructions, had sent the money to New York, on the morning following each performance. Mr. Thoroughbrace had expostulated and protested, but had received a reply to his letter, in which Colonel Hix wrote:

"It would be foolish, Mr. Thoroughbrace, to carry all

that money around with you, when I can bank it here and get two per cent interest."

The Company had been on the road four weeks. Mr. Dodd paid railway fares and hotel bills, but said not a word about salaries. Urgent appeals were made to Mr. Thoroughbrace, to which he made a stout resistance, but finally, he gave small sums to each. As he approached his native heath, his courage and determination arose together. He telegraphed to his partner that he should go no farther than Snickersville, unless Colonel Hix turned up with what was due for salaries, and what was coming to him.

As the curtain fell on the last performance before the advent of the company into Snickersville, Business Manager Thoroughbrace called the members together, and read the following telegram :

"LEANDER THOROUGHBRACE, ESQ.

I will be with you at Snickersville, and bring the capital,
and all the money we have made, with me.

J. ORLANDO HIX."

Although pocket-books were light, hearts were happy that night, and at the supper which took place after the performance, Mr. Thoroughbrace proposed the health of Colonel Hix, and the toast was drunk with that professional enthusiasm of which actors only are capable.

CHAPTER XIX

A PLEASANT AFTERNOON

CAPT. EZRA MILLIKEN brought his high-backed, wooden arm-chair out upon the portico of the store, and, filling his pipe, sat down to enjoy his after-dinner smoke. He was at peace with himself and with all mankind. The day was pleasant, the morning trade had been good, and Mrs. Milliken, who was a fine cook, had given him a dinner just suited to his taste.

As he sat there, a stout, heavily built man turned in from the road, and came up the path which led to the store door.

"Hullo, Bat!" cried the Captain; "where be ye bound?"

"Oh," said Mr. Mulvey, for it was he, "I'm going over to Amri Struthers to help him with his plowin'."

"Why," remarked the Captain, "Amri is an able-bodied man, and he's never had nobody to help him before. What's the matter with him?"

"They say circumstances alter cases," said Mr. Mulvey, "and Mr. Struthers is a victim of a circumstance. Haven't yer heard?"

The Captain shook his head.

"Well, you know," began Mr. Mulvey, "Struthers has a white cow that's up to all sorts of deviltry. She had a bad habit of running away, and so Struthers put a big bell on her neck so he could foller her. Well, last night, somebody — I won't say who, for I don't know — took off the bell, and Struthers couldn't find where she was. So he travelled all night through the woods and, about four o'clock this mornin', he got into the swamp and come near givin' up the ghost. When he got home, he found Mrs.

Struthers most frightened to death. He began tellin' her about the cow, and then she told him that the cow was all right in the barn and had been there all night. You see, Struthers was so tuckered out, he couldn't do some plowin' he had to do, and so that's the reason he sent for me. It ain't my fault if I have to profit by other people's misfortunes. Say, Cap'n, what's them things?"

"Them?" said the Captain, "why, them's lobsters. I had half a dozen sent up from Boston. I had one for dinner and it was fine. Don't you want one—only twenty-five cents a pound?"

"All the lobsters I ever eat," said Mr. Mulvey, "were red. How comes it that these fellers is green?"

"They are live lobsters," said the Captain. "All you've got to do is to cook them and they'll turn red."

"I'll have nothing to do with them, Cap'n. I'm more American than I am Irish, but I'm Irish enough not to take a poor dumb animal that has the patriotism to wear a green coat and do anything to him that'll make him put on a red one," and Mr. Mulvey turned away, and started for the Struthers's farm.

The Captain's pipe had gone out during the conversation. He fumbled in all his pockets, but could not find a match, so he was obliged to go into the store for a light. When he came out, he brought with him the last issue of the *White Mountain Sun*, and ensconcing himself comfortable in his armchair, began its perusal. The paper came out early every Wednesday morning, but the brisk morning trade had prevented the Captain from looking it over before.

It was the usual country sheet, so well known to all who have perused one; but the *White Mountain Sun* had a peculiar feature in a column headed, "Our Folks at Home." Of course, Mr. J. Austin Donaldson, the editor

and proprietor of the paper, assumed entire responsibility for what appeared in this column, but it was an open secret in the town, that the majority, if not all the items were written by Mr. Hosea Fogg, the assistant editor, although his name did not appear in print therein.

The Captain held the paper in one hand and slapped his knee with the other. Then he broke into a loud laugh.

"Well, that's a good one," he exclaimed.

The item which had provoked this outburst of hilarity ran as follows :

"The Lakeside boarders are finding fault because the cook uses pond water and they find shiners in their tea. The Lakeside boarders are always kicking about something. What do they expect in their tea — brook-trout?"

The Captain sat musing for some time. He was evidently considering a problem and had not yet arrived at a solution. "That's strange," he said, "Mulvey didn't know them were lobsters. I guess I'd better put up a sign."

He went into the store, and in a short time, emerged with a long strip of wrapping paper, upon which he had painted with some stove-blackening the words: "Fresh Lobsters For Sale Here." He nailed the strip on to the railing of the portico, pounding two fingers and a thumb during the operation. Laying the hammer upon the upper step, and, beside it, a dozen or so of tacks which he had not used, he took up the newspaper and turned again to the "Personal Column."

He was aroused from his pleasant occupation by the sound of a thin, squeaky voice, and looking up, saw old Caleb Leeds, who always told every stranger that he "was nigh on to ninety-five and the oldest man in these parts."

"Got a new kind of goods, have ye, Cap'n?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Leeds; you know I always keep the best, and nothing but the best."

"Well, I kinder thought from that 'ere word Fresh that the lobsters ye had been selling us in the past times was not jest up to the mark. Got any fresh tobaccy?"

The Captain arose, and Mr. Leeds followed him into the store.

"Oh, I always thought you wanted your tobacco dry, because it burned so much better in your pipe."

"Well, I want the latest thing there is out, and if fresh lobsters is the best, I want fresh tobaccy."

The Captain was used to the whimsical ways of old Mr. Leeds.

"Well, Caleb," he said, "you take that tobacco home and smoke it and, when it's all gone, if you don't think it's fresh enough, you jest bring it back and I'll give you some other kind for it."

"Well, that's a bargain, Cap'n," squeaked the old man, as he left the store.

The Captain brought out the old tomato can which held the stove-blackening, and, brush in hand, painted out the word "Fresh" before the word "Lobsters." As he turned to go up the steps, a voice hailed him:

"Hullo, Cap'n, got another store?"

The Captain turned about and saw that it was Mr. David Winkle, one of his best customers.

"Not yet, Mr. Winkle. One's as much as I care to attend to, and sometimes I've thought one is too much. What made you ask the question?"

"Oh, I was looking at your sign there about the lobsters. I saw that it read: For Sale Here," and he put a strong emphasis on the last word, "and so I didn't know but you had some other place where you sold 'em."

The Captain took off his hat and scratched his head. "Well, Winkle," he said, "I never thought of that before. I guess that word is superfluous."

The brush and paint-pot were again brought into requisition, and the word "Here" disappeared from the sign.

After attending to Mr. Winkle's wants, the Captain resumed his seat and hunted for his lost place in the paper.

"Hullo, Cap'n!" The voice came from within the store.

The Captain threw down the paper and, entering, found that it was Mr. Ebenezer Stark, who lived in the farmhouse that was nearest the store. As it saved Mr. Stark quite a long walk, he had followed the custom for a long time of coming in at the back door. Ebenezer depended chiefly upon his farm for his support, but did little jobs of carpentering for his neighbors, and the purchases that he made comprised hinges and screws. As they came out upon the portico, Mr. Stark said:

"I'm goin' down to fix Jason White's barn door."

He went down the steps and was starting towards the road when the Captain asked: "Did you see that piece in the paper about the boarders up to Lakeside?"

"No," said Ebenezer; "I used to take that paper, but there's so much darned nonsense in it, I gave it up and put the money into meal for the chickens."

"Well, I'll read it to you," said the Captain; "that won't cost you nothing."

Mr. Stark thought that he might as well enjoy the paragraph sitting down as standing up, and he took a seat on the top step, but he did not remain there long. With a bound, he landed on the grass, about ten feet from the store.

"What's that?" he yelled. "Something bit me!"

The Captain looked down. The hammer was there, but the tacks were gone. Repressing his laughter, the Captain said: "It must have been one of those lobsters. Didn't you see the sign?"

Mr. Stark regarded the sign attentively. "Oh, they are for sale, are they?" he remarked, finally. "I didn't know but what you were goin' to start a conservatory and put them in it."

Mr. Stark had an aggressive way about him which provoked the Captain, and they often had sharp words together.

"What do you s'pose I got the lobsters for, if I didn't get them to sell?" he asked, in a sarcastic manner.

"Well," said Mr. Stark, "if that's so, I don't see the need of putting those two words For Sale on. In my opinion, you wasted paper and ink both when you did it,' and feeling that he had the best of the argument, he started towards the road.

The Captain went down the steps and took a look at the sign. "Well," he ejaculated, "'tain't how it looks to me, but how it seems to others that counts, after all," and, an instant later, the words "For Sale" had been obliterated, and "Lobsters" stood alone in all its glory.

The wind had blown the *White Mountain Sun* to the farther end of the portico, but the captain regained possession of it and sat down determined that the next customer should wait until he had finished reading it.

When he had read it, he threw the paper down, and ejaculated: "What a fool that Joe Sias is!" Then he took up the paper and read the item again:

"Speaking of meat, Joe Sias says he has written to Greenland for a ship-load of whale blubbers. He proposes to run a blubber wagon twice a week through Snickersville and Willoughby, until he beats the meat trusts and kills high prices. Whale steak, four cents a pound, flukes and blow-holes thrown in."

"Well, I don't know," said the Captain, "which is the bigger fool, Joe Sias, or Hose Fogg that writes them things. I guess if they had to eat one meal of whale-

blubber that'd be all they would want. I guess if they'd been through what I have, ridin' all night on the back of a whale, hangin' on to a harpoon, with nothing but blubber to eat and salt water to drink, they'd be glad to pay any price for good beef and mutton, but it's just such fools as him, and folks that write such things in the newspapers, that make sensible people discontented. There's too many people that thinks that what they don't know nothing about is better'n what they've got."

After thus giving vent to his feelings, the Captain resumed his seat, and looked up the road. A long distance off, towards Willoughby, he could see a black speck which seemed to be moving, and quite fast, too. It came nearer and nearer, growing larger and larger, until, finally, a form, well known to everyone in Snickersville, came in sight. It was that of Stub Dutcher.

"Hullo, Stub!" cried the Captain, and "Hullo, Cap'n," came back in response. Stub held a long strip of paper in his hand, printed in large type and in red and blue ink.

"Say, Cap'n," he said, "here's one of the show-bills. I've been over to Willoughby, and a feller's just got off the train, and he's pasting little ones like this and big ones, ever so much bigger, on everything where they will stick. I asked him when the show was comin' to Snickersville, and he said there was a full account of it in the paper. Did yer see it?"

The Captain went in search of the paper, which the wind had carried off the portico to the grass-plot beyond. In a short time the article was found:

"The Cosmopolitan Corinthian Burlesque Company will appear at the Town Hall next Wednesday and Thursday evenings. The company is said to be large and has been playing to capacity in New England towns and cities ever since it left New York. Attention is called to an unique advertisement in another column. Tickets will be on sale Tuesday morning at Milliken's store."

"That's the fust I've heerd of it," said the Captain.

"The feller that's putting up the bills," said Stub, "has got the tickets, and he'll be up here with 'em before dark. He told me to tell you so."

"Well," said the Captain, "I'll sell 'em if I get a commission, but I ain't goin' to sell no more tickets for nothing."

"Oh, he'll make it right with you. He said he'd give me two tickets if I would talk up the show around town for the next week, and I told him there wouldn't be a living person in Snickersville that wouldn't hear about that show before Saturday night, and he said he was sorry they had spent the money on the advertisements."

"You ought to get a job as town-crier, Stub," said the Captain. "Oh, here's the advertisement.

TO THE PATRONS OF SNICKERSVILLE AND VICINITY:

I have the honor to announce that the COSMOPOLITAN CORINTHIAN BURLESQUE COMPANY will appear at the Snickersville Town Hall on Wednesday and Thursday evenings of next week. I will not dwell upon the magnitude of the company, the beauty of the costumes, the ability of the actors, or the fine play, but will call attention to the one simple fact that MR. LEANDER THOROUGHBRACE, a townsman of yours, is my partner and the business manager of the company. He was born and bred in the old Granite State, and I feel confident that you will show your appreciation of his business sagacity in becoming connected with such a transcendent, spectacular, musical production that you will honor him with a crowded house at each performance. I have the honor to be,

Your humble servant in the cause of the art,
JAMES ORLANDO HIX."

When the Captain finished reading, Stub asked: "Well, what do you think of that?"

"Well, I think, Stub, the feller, whoever he is, is pre-sumin' a little too much on our regard for Mr. Leander

Thoroughbrace. Why, Thoroughbrace ain't been livin' here more'n three months, and he hadn't been here more'n six weeks afore he started off to New York. I s'pose it was to go into business with this Hix. He must have money, and I can't say but what he's always paid prompt enough for what he bought of me. But we've had so many of them shows come here with big sounding words that our folks are getting suspicious."

"Oh, they will be more'n suspicious when the feller gets up here with those bills he's puttin' up," said Stub. "Some of the big ones has girls on 'em, just as they have at the circus. You know, Deacon Dalton kept the circus folks from puttin' up their bills in Snickersville the last time they showed over to Willoughby, and I guess I'd better go up to the Deacon's house and tell him what the feller's up to. The Deacon knows I'm pretty well acquainted with what's goin' on in this town, and he told me if I gave him any information that would be of service to the Ebenezer Society, he would give me a dollar," and Stub ran off as fast as his long, thin, wiry legs could carry him.

It was now past three o'clock. The Captain looked forward to at least an hour of uninterrupted literary enjoyment. He was deeply interested in the description of a new process of making hay from corn stalks, which feed would go twice as far and cost only half as much as the best Timothy, when his attention was attracted by the approach of a man and woman. The man was tall and thin, and dressed in a suit of seedy, rusty black. The woman was short and stout, and carried a covered basket on her arm.

"Is this the only store in town?" asked the man.

The Captain was not pleased with the form of the question, but he replied politely: "We don't need but one, for I keep everything."

"Do you sell books?" asked the man.

"I keep the Old Farmers' Almanack — but I can get anything you want."

"Have you a Physical Geography?" asked the stranger.

"No," said the Captain, "I don't keep no kind of physic. If you want physic, you'll have to go to Doctor Danby."

The man smiled — a mild, weary sort of smile. "Well, if you had one," he went on, "there wouldn't be a particle of truth in it. If you will come out here, I'll tell you the most wonderful thing you ever heard in your life. It's no joke — no story — but a wonderful, physical truth."

The man's face lighted up as he spoke, and he was so earnest in his manner that the Captain became interested and followed him down the grass-plot in front of the store until they were nearly to the road.

"Now, tip your head back," said the man, "and look up to the firmament above you."

The Captain obeyed.

"What do you see?" asked the man.

"Why, I see the sky. What else can you expect me to see?"

"Do you see any sign of motion?" was the stranger's next query. "Does it seem to you as though you were moving or that the sky was moving?"

"Why, no," said the Captain. "Of course, I know, for I learned it in school, that the earth is turning 'round and 'round on its axle."

"That's where you make your great mistake," said the stranger. "You learned that in school and, of course, you believe it. But now you are a grown-up man and should put away childish things and learn what is true. Now, I tell you the world isn't round. It's flat and it's not turning 'round on its axle, as you call it, but it's staying just

where it is ; and, to prove it, if you should stand there where you are for the next twenty-four hours, you would not feel any sign of motion or anything to indicate that the earth was moving."

"Well, I've stayed here as long as I mean to," said the Captain. "I've got my store to attend to and I don't care anything about sich things. The Lord made the world and all there is in it, and I am satisfied with the job." He turned towards the store, then stopped suddenly: "Where's that woman — your wife? Where's she gone?"

"My wife?" said the man with an air of astonishment; "I haven't any wife. There was a woman walked up towards the store with me, but I don't know who she was. I never saw her before. Perhaps this is the one," and he pointed to an old woman coming down the road, leaning upon two canes.

The Captain's first inclination was to get to the store as soon as possible to see what had become of the fat woman, but Widow Patience Fowler was one of his best customers, and it would not do to run away and leave her. Mrs. Fowler had suffered from rheumatism for years, and she needed a helping hand, for the ground sloped quite sharply from the store down to the road.

It took some time for the Captain and his slowly moving companion to reach the portico. As he went up the steps, he looked back, but the man in black had disappeared. There was no one in the store, and to all appearances nothing had been disturbed.

"Well, Mis' Fowler," said the Captain, "what can I do for you to-day? How's your rheumatiz?"

"Oh, it gits wusser and wusser. My right foot is swollen up so that the last pair of shoes I bought of you is too small, and I've got to git the largest size you have — and perhaps something bigger."

"Oh, I guess I can suit you this time. The last lot I had come up from the city had a pair of number 'leven's amongst 'em, and they are as big as all out doors. They are right in this box here." He took it down and looked inside, but it was empty. "I thought I put 'em in that box," he explained. He went through every shoe box he had. There was no sign of the number eleven's.

"Well, I know I haven't sold 'em, and they were there in that box this morning, for I checked off the bill."

"Then somebody must've stolen 'em," said Mrs. Fowler.

"Well, that's jest what I'm thinkin'," remarked the Captain. "I'm awful sorry, but I'll send down and get another pair for yer. Anything else to-day?"

"Yes, I would like a couple of pounds of tripe — honey-comb."

"I've got just the article," said the Captain; "came this morning. I told Jason White the next lot he had, I wanted it, and the hull of it, and I've got it."

A careful search, however, failed to find the large tin pail of tripe. The Captain put two and two together. "I guess is was a put-up job," he ejaculated.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Mrs. Fowler.

"Well, I'll own up," said the Captain. "You saw that feller that was talkin' to me down by the road? Well, he was tryin' to prove to me that the earth was flat, and I guess if I had waited any longer, he'd have proved that the moon was made of green cheese. While I was talkin' with him, a woman that was with him must have got away with them shoes and that tripe. Well, we learn by experience, Mis' Fowler. I'm awful sorry. Anything else to-day?"

"No," said the Widow, snappishly; "what I wanted was shoes and tripe and, if you haven't got neither, I don't want nothing. I'm so tired out walkin' down here, Mr.

Milliken, if you have no objections, I'll sit down and rest a minute."

"Why, certainly, Mis' Fowler ; I'll bring my arm-chair right in for yer."

After she was seated, he said : " I just thought that I put some old shoe boxes on that top shelf. It won't do any harm to look 'em through," and after mounting upon a stool, he reached for the boxes, but they were too high up, and he was obliged to step upon one of the shelves. They never knew just how it happened —

Ebenezer Stark's cat had been hanging around the store for some time, waiting for a chance to claw a smoked herring from the box. In order to conceal its intention from the watchful Captain, it walked out upon the portico, where its attention was attracted by the lobsters. One of them appeared to be in a good-natured mood, and the cat playfully tapped the lobster on its nose, just back of its left whisker. The lobster seemed to enjoy it and reached out to shake hands—they shook. In two seconds the cat regretted it. She put the supreme effort of her life into a yell that must have been heard in Willoughby. In two seconds more, she and the lobster were revolving at the rate of seven hundred whirls a minute, the cat spitting four times to each whirl. It chanced, just at that moment, that Jonathan Witherspoon's bulldog was coming up the road and, seeing what he supposed was a hedgehog, made a rush for the portico and sailed in. In the scuffle which followed, the lobster caught him by the tail with the other claw. The dog set up a ki-yi and made a break for the open door, through which he rushed, dragging the lobster and the cat after him. The Captain yelled, " Mad Dog!" and tried to climb to a higher shelf, which broke down and he slipped off into a basket of eggs. Mrs. Patience Fowler, despite her rheumatism, jumped over a four-foot

counter, without touching it. The combination went out the back door, swung around into the Captain's back yard, somehow become entangled, and when the combination emerged into the road again, a hen was being dragged in the rear.

Mrs. Patience Fowler was so much benefited by her enforced exercise that, on her way home, she walked much faster than she had for years. "Perhaps it was the hand of the Lord, after all," she soliloquized. "I've heerd tell that a sudden shock that came unexpected will often do rheumatiz more good than all the medicine the doctors could give yer. Well, if my rheumatiz is cured, I can go without shoes and tripe."

It took some time for the Captain to put the store into presentable condition, and to count up his loss on broken eggs and carpenter's work that would be required. Then he thought of the lobsters and went to the door. A young man, evidently a summer boarder, was riding up on a bicycle. He followed the Captain into the store and then carefully surveyed the stock in trade before speaking.

He was a very fresh young man and thought it would be a good joke to have some fun with the country store-keeper: "Say, Boss, I've been riding quite a while and I am hungry. I would like to buy half a pound of doughnut-holes."

The Captain had seen fresh city chaps before and took his measure instantly. Besides, the events of the very pleasant afternoon he had passed had sharpened his wits and increased his perceptive powers.

"I'm sorry, sir, but doughnut-holes come only in two pound cans and I couldn't break a can even for one of my best customers." As he spoke, he pulled a tin box towards him, lifted up the cover, and took a handful of red pepper from it.



CAPT. MILLIKEN AND —



"Gee whizz!" he cried; "there's a spider on yer back, as big as a tea cup."

"Spider?" cried the young man. "Hully gee! I hate spiders. Brush him off, please."

The Captain caught the young man by the collar of his negligé shirt with one hand, while the red pepper in the other hand found its way down the young man's back.

"Holy Moses!" he cried; "I can feel him crawling down my back."

Down went the Captain's hand, which was quickly withdrawn. Then he ran into the back yard, threw something on the ground, and stamped upon it vigorously.

"That's the end of that spider," he said, as he came back into the store. "It was the biggest one I ever see. Did he bite yer?"

"No, I think not," said the young man, "but my back feels rather crawly."

"Oh, such things allus makes a man feel nervous, but you'll get over it in a little while," and he followed the young man to the door, saw him mount his bicycle, and watched him until he went out of sight at the turn in the road.

"Well," said the Captain, "that sort o' makes up for all the troubles I've had this afternoon. By the time he's gone a mile over that hot road, that red pepper will get in its work and he'll think he's struck a hornet's nest."

The Captain went behind the counter and began to get ready for his evening trade by mixing dried currant leaves with some Old Hyson, to which combination he had given the name — the "Green and Black Blend."

CHAPTER XX

STRANDED

THE Cosmopolitan Corinthian Burlesque Company had made its first appearance at Snickersville Town Hall. The show was over and the audience departed. Many lived within walking distance, but the majority went home in chaises, carryalls, buckboards, and even farm wagons, the latter fitted up for the occasion with chairs, or planks to take the place of them.

Mr. Thoroughbrace and Mr. Dodd sat in a small room in the Town Hall, "figurin' up." When the account was balanced it was found that the expenses exceeded the receipts by thirty-one cents, and Mr. Dodd asked Mr. Thoroughbrace to supply the deficiency.

"Well, I'll do it this time. 'Tain't much and it won't break me. But this settles it. You'll get no more money out of me—not another cent."

"Do you mean we are going to bust up here?" asked Mr. Dodd.

"You might go farther and fare wuss," was the reply. "Where's my partner who was going to bring on all the capital and all the money we'd made?"

In his excitement, he struck the table a violent blow, which sent a pile of pennies scattering across the floor. After much exertion and the burning of half a bunch of matches, used to light up dark corners, Mr. Dodd succeeded in recovering all but six of the Nation's smallest coin.

Mr. Dodd thought it was time to answer Mr. Thoroughbrace's question, so he ventured to remark:

"Perhaps Colonel Hix failed to make connection at White River Junction."

"I guess he did. New York and White River Junction are a good many miles apart, but if the Colonel could straddle as well as he can lie, he'd got the train, sure. You just pay those bills, Mr. Dodd, and then each man for himself."

"We're six cents short, Mr. Thoroughbrace."

"Didn't you hear what I said, Mr. Dodd? Not a cent more out of me. Pay the bills as far as they'll go, and tell the last man that the rest of his money is on the floor here, and let him look for it the same's I'm going to look for mine."

"Where are you going?" asked Dodd.

"Where am I going?" yelled Mr. Thoroughbrace. "I'm going to follow that villain — that thief — that bunko-man — that silver-tongued Jimmie Hix — to the ends of the earth, and p'raps off of it. I'll have my money back or see him behind bars."

"But how shall we get back to New York?"

"Take my advice young man," said Mr. Thoroughbrace, "and keep away from New York. It's a sink of iniquity, and its bite's wuss than an adder's. Spring's comin' on and there'll be plenty of farm-work."

"But the ladies?" persisted Mr. Dodd.

"Oh, there'll be plenty for them to do, makin' butter and cheese, and pickin' berries. Good-bye, Dodd, I'm off. I think you're honest, but you're as big a fool as I am, and that's saying a good deal."

When Mr. Dodd reached the boarding house which was carried on by Mr. Riccadonna, in conjunction with his restaurant, he found the members of the company enjoying a supper which had been ordered by Mr. Dangerfield — on company account. To the merry assemblage Mr. Dodd communicated the startling intelligence that Mr. Thoroughbrace had refused to put up any more money

and that he was going to New York in search of Colonel Hix, to get his money back.

"If he finds half of what he's gone for, he'll do well," said Mr. Dangerfield.

"Which half?" Miss Dumaresque asked, innocently.

"He'll probably find the Colonel," was the reply, "but it will take both of them to find the money. What was the business to-night, Dodd?"

"We took in twenty-one dollars and a half — expenses twenty-one, eighty-one, and I'm six cents short."

"Well, we're not dead yet," said Mr. Dangerfield. "The show was billed for two nights and we've only played one. We may have a rousing good house to-morrow night, and get enough to take us to our summer residences. If worse comes to worse, we'll sell the scenery for fire-wood and auction off the costumes. They'll be just the things for the farmers to dress up their scarecrows with this summer."

"Oh, Mr. Dangerfield, that isn't nice of you," said Miss Dumaresque.

"I know it," said he, "but if we don't raise enough to get out of town, we shall be scarecrows ourselves in less than a month."

"Oh, you're joking, Mr. Dangerfield."

"I am not, Miss Dumaresque. In these country towns, when persons have no visible means of support — I am not referring to our burlesque — the town authorities feed them on bread and water until they get very thin, then they turn them loose in the corn-fields to keep away the crows."

"I don't believe a word you say, Mr. Dangerfield."

That gentleman picked up a newspaper: "Ah! Latest edition of the *White Mountain Sun*. Here is our advertisement," and he read it aloud for the benefit of his

companions. "That was paid for. Wait until you see the editorial opinion. What's this?"

We regret to learn that our venerable townsman, Mr. Timothy Atwood, who has just passed his eighty-third birthday, is in arrears for three years' taxes, and his house will be sold for non-payment next Wednesday. It is thought that the selectmen will be obliged to send him, his daughter, and her little son to the poorhouse, as they have no means of support."

"Why don't they make scarecrows of them?" asked Miss Dumaresque.

"Don't read anything more like that, Olney," said Winnifred. "I'm so sorry for them. I wish we could afford to give them a benefit. I wonder how much they owe. If I could get anybody to buy this ring—" and she looked at the diamond on her finger—"I'd loan them the money."

"Were you ever in a stranded company before, Miss Dumaresque?" asked Mr. Steele.

"No, but I rather enjoy the experience. I can telegraph for money, if it becomes necessary. I have money in the bank."

"Why don't you help this old Mr. Atwood, if you are so well off?" asked Rosa.

"There's an old saying," said Miss Dumaresque, "that charity begins at home. Perhaps in a few days I shall find it more imperative to help friends than total strangers."

"I say," cried Mr. Dangerfield, looking up from the newspaper, "they've got a funny man on this paper. Why he could get a chance in New York in a minute."

"Read it to us," they all cried.

"Anything to dispel the prevailing gloom," said Mr. Steele.

"I think this will do it," remarked Mr. Dangerfield.

"The heavy wind, one day last week, blew down Job Watkin's chimney. Job blamed his wife Sophie for it; he blames her for everything. She began to cry and yelled for her mother, who lives in a room upstairs by herself. The old lady is very tough and wiry, and can get away with Job in a fair scrap, but being subject to fits, she can't always come when Sophie calls. It was so this time. The falling bricks had scared her half to death, and Job and Sophie found her in a fit. They got her fit medicine out of the closet and stuffed it down her throat; then discovered they had been filling her up with Rough on Rats. Job said they would both be hung, and skipped into the woods. He's there yet. The old lady came around all right. She says there's no kind of poison that has any effect on her, only to give her the heekups. If Job sees this notice, he will please come home. His wife is worrying."

When the merriment had subsided, Mr. Dangerfield said :

"Speaking of poisons reminds me of a story."

"Oh, do tell it," cried Miss Dumaresque.

Mr. Dangerfield bowed : "I will, for your benefit. Well, you see Buckheister was a drummer. He got up a new kind of liniment for all the pains and aches that flesh falls heir to, and he hit on a new plan of selling his goods. He had some gummed labels printed and whenever he came in contact with a bottle, no matter where it was, he'd stick on one of those labels. He put one on a tomato ketchup bottle in a German restaurant. The restaurant changed hands. The new proprietor, another Schneider, seeing this label, ordered a dozen bottles of Dot Buckheister's Balm, and the result was that inside another week he was in jail for thirty-eight manslaughters. You see, when applied internally, it had a more pronounced effect on the soul than it did on the body."

A scream of laughter followed this story.

"Ladies and gentlemen —" The words were uttered in a loud tone of voice, and all turned towards the speaker.

It was Mr. Riccadonna. "Ladies and gentlemen," he repeated, "it is midnight, and the rules and regulations of the Ebenezer Moral Reform Society require that all lights shall be put out at twelve o'clock. Their rules are approved by the board of selectmen, and I'm liable to a fine if I disobey."

"Ah, now I understand," said Mr. Dangerfield. "We've struck a moral town. That accounts for the house to-night, and to-morrow night we'll play to empty benches. Jeanette, is there any of that hemlock wine left in the bottle?"

"Please put out the lights, Mr. Riccadonna," said Winnifred; "we can get along without them. There's a beautiful fire in that old-fashioned fireplace—I love them so—but won't you kindly put on another log? I like to hear it snap and see the sparks fly up the great chimney. Come, let's all gather about the fire, and Mr. Dodd and I will sing you a song that we've been practising, that will quiet your nerves, raise your hopes, and give you soothing slumbers. It is called The Old Chimney Corner."

"How appropriate!" remarked Miss Dumaresque.

"Are you ready, Mr. Dodd?" asked Winnifred.

They may talk of the joys of the present,
But I love the old-time day;
And the lingering thoughts of my childhood,
In my heart will live for aye!
I can never forget the old corner,
Where I sat a child of four,
O'er my heart comes a dream of the pleasure
That I had in the days of yore!
No palace proud, nor throne of king,
Could to my heart such pleasure bring,
As I should feel if once again,
I could but see the swinging crane.
And sit and hear the singing kettle,
At grandma's side, upon the settle,
And see once more, as oft in dreaming,
The chimney-corner brightly gleaming.

"Now, let us all join in the chorus," cried Winnifred.

See my grandma's pipe with its puff, puff, puff,
Hear my father sing Robin, Ruff, Ruff, Ruff,
Hear the baby laugh, and its hands clap, clap,
See the backlog burn, with a snap, snap, snap,
And sit and hear the singing kettle
At grandma's side upon the settle,
And see once more, as oft in dreaming
The chimney-corner brightly gleaming.

CHAPTER XXI

AN INJUNCTION PRAYED FOR

As a rule, the members of the theatrical profession are not early risers. The artists belonging to Colonel Hix's Burlesque Company were, therefore, an exception to the rule the morning after the first performance in Snickersville. By eight o'clock they had had their breakfasts and were seated upon the broad piazza of the Hotel Riccadonna, enjoying the dry, cool, bracing air which came from the mountains.

Winnie placed her hand upon Olney's arm in a confiding way and, looking up, asked: "What are we going to do, Olney? We have lost our engineer and fireman, and in in such cases, the engine is apt to go astray."

"Oh, it will come out all right," said Dangerfield. "Eli's gone up to the store to feel the public pulse. He'll be back in a little while and tell us what the prospects are. I think we shall make enough to-night to get us out of town and back to our old stamping-ground, which is all we can ask, I suppose."

At that moment, Mr. Dodd came in sight, and the intelligence he brought was eagerly awaited by the members of the company.

"Well, how did you find things?" asked Dangerfield.

"I saw Captain Milliken — he's the man that runs the store. He was at the show last night, and he thought it was the best thing he ever saw. During our subsequent conversation, however, he told me he had never been to the theatre before, which statement rather detracted from the value of his previous compliment."

Miss Cholmondeley interposed: "But did he think we would get enough to-night to pay our fares home?"

"Why," said Mr. Dodd, "of course, I didn't give him to understand that we were in urgent need of money. He thinks we are all well fixed."

"Well, we are," said Mr. Dangerfield. "I am afraid we're so well fixed that we shall find it hard work to get away."

"Who's this coming?" asked Winnie.

He was a very stout man, but moved with a light, springy step. He had a round, full face, with a decidedly florid complexion.

"He looks like one of those old English squires that we see upon the stage," remarked Mr. Steele, and there was a silent assent to the comparison.

The man came up to the piazza. "Where's the boss?" he asked, and his voice, instead of being rough and heavy as might have been expected, was high-pitched and sharp.

"We don't know," said Mr. Dangerfield.

This reply did not suit Mr. Dodd, and he broke in: "They haven't got up yet."

"Well, who's next in command?" asked the man.

"What do you wish to know for?" and Mr. Dangerfield's voice was full of asperity.

"Wall, I reckon you have a right to know who I am and what my business is. My name is Enoch Scales, and I am the town constable, tax-collector, and mail-carrier."

"Oh, I see," said Mr. Dangerfield, "you have come to bring us our mail. Of course, you did not expect us to pay taxes when we have been here less than a day, and I am sure none of us are wanted for breaking the law."

"Wall," said Mr. Scales, "we've got laws in this 'ere town, and besides them, we've got rules and regulations. The rules and regulations are made by the Ebenezer

Moral Reform Society, and as I am agent for that Society, when they have any notices to serve, they call on me."

"Well, have you got a notice to serve on us?" was Mr. Dangerfield's inquiry.

"Yes, I have. You see, Deacon Solomon Dalton is President of the Ebenezer Society. He was at the show last night, and, after thinkin' it over, he has come to the conclusion that it ain't the kind of a show that's suited for our town, and he's asked Squire Rodgers to get out an injunction so's to stop you from givin' the show to-night."

"What's the matter with the show?" asked Mr. Dodd.

Mr. Scales pondered for a moment: "Wall, I ain't a lawyer, nor judge, nor jury, and 'tain't my business to go inter pertic'lers, but I jedge from what I heerd that your show is considered a little too much for our town, which is run on strictly moral principles."

"Oh, fudge!" cried Dangerfield; "there's nothing in our performance to which a six month's old baby could take exception."

"I think it is outrageous, don't you, Mr. Dangerfield?" cried Miss Cholmondeley.

"We'll fight it," said the comedian. Turning to Scales, he asked: "Can we get a lawyer here in town?"

"Wall, I guess not. We hain't got but one lawyer here — that's Abe Barnett, and he's engaged by the Ebenezer Society the year round. Of course, Squire Rodgers is a lawyer, but he can't be judge and lawyer, too."

"Can we get one in the next town?"

"They hain't got none. They hain't got nothin' over in Willoughby 'cept corn and pigs, and the post-office."

"Then there isn't much show for us," remarked Mr. Dangerfield, "unless the judge is a square man."

"Oh, Squire Rodgers is square," said Mr. Scales, "but the Ebenezer Society will git the injunction all right. They run the town, and if Squire Rodgers should set himself up agin them, they'd manage it so as to boost him out o' office."

"At what time is the hearing to be?" asked Winnie.

"Wall, mum, it's fixed for ten o'clock, and it will be held in Squire Rodgers's house, right over there," and he pointed to a building about a quarter of a mile distant — "that one with the weathercock painted white."

Mr. Dangerfield extended his hand to Mr. Scales, who grasped it and gave it a good old-fashioned shake.

"We don't blame you, Mr. Scales," said Dangerfield, as he rubbed the hand which had been imprisoned with the other. "You have only done your duty and we are much obliged to you for giving us such early notice. We will be on hand at the time appointed, and I think we can convince the Ebenezers that we are not so bad as they think we are."

Mr. Scales shook his head. "I wouldn't feel too sartin," he said. "When the Ebenezers make up their mind about a thing, nothin'll change 'em." He took off his hat and made a not ungraceful bow to the ladies, backed down the steps, and started at a brisk walk in the direction from which he had come.

"What do you think of that, Dangerfield?" asked Mr. Dodd.

"I can't tell until I hear the evidence," was the reply.

"Come, Miss Winton, let's take a walk. I want to speak to Mr. Riccadonna. He's down to the barn."

When they reached the building, Mr. Dangerfield said: "I would like to have a drive this beautiful morning. I need a little recreation."

"Afraid I can't accommodate you," said Mr. Riccadonna.

"The fact is, all my horses are out except that white one, and I never allow anybody to drive him except myself."

"Anything the matter with him?" asked Mr. Dangerfield.

"Well, no, not exactly. He has a habit of standing on his hind legs, backing when you don't want him to, and running away whenever he feels so inclined."

"Those are certainly good traits," said Mr. Dangerfield. "If I had a horse like that, I should be greatly pleased with him. I think I can manage him."

"Well, if you take him," said Riccadonna, "it will be at your own risk, and with the understanding if the carriage is smashed that you pay for it."

"All right," was the reply. He whispered to Winnie: "You walk back to the hotel. I'm going down the road to the cobbler shop. I need a nail or two in my boot heel," and turning to Riccadonna, he said: "Harness him up. I'll be back in a few minutes. I'll run the risk and pay the bills if we have a smash-up."

Mr. Dangerfield was back at the barn inside of a quarter of an hour and found the steed and the vehicle awaiting him. He drove to the hotel and Winnie took a seat beside him.

"Where are you going?" asked Mr. Dodd.

"Riccadonna says I'm going to have a smash-up. I can tell you better when we get back."

The horse bounded forward and the occupants of the carriage were soon lost to the sight of those gathered upon the piazza.

For a while, the animal pursued the even tenor of his way, and Dangerfield was beginning to think that there was more danger of his being scared than hurt, when the horse shied at the sight of a clump of bushes, stood upon his hind legs, and, as soon as he came down upon all fours, took the bit in his teeth and started off at a gallop.

"Are you afraid, Winnie?" asked Dangerfield.

"Not with you, Olney," was the reply.

"Hold on tight, then. I can keep him in the road and, in a little while, after he's got through his fun, we'll have some."

For fully three miles, the horse went at the top of his speed. When they approached the main road in Willoughby, he did not slacken, but kept on, causing the hens and chickens to scamper in every direction, while the men stopped plowing and the women ceased churning to look at what they supposed was a runaway horse.

"I don't know the road," said Dangerfield, "but if it is like the average country road, if we keep on, we shall come out where we started from."

The horse was getting tired and slackened his pace of his own accord.

"He's all right now," remarked Winnie. "He probably doesn't get enough exercise."

"Well," said Dangerfield, "I'm going to give him some now," and putting a hand inside his coat sleeve, he drew out a piece of sole leather, some two feet in length by three inches wide, and having a round hole cut in one end. Dangerfield inserted his forefinger in the hole, and, leaning forward, gave the horse a smart crack with his improvised whip. For the next five miles, the cowhide had the best of it, and when time was up, the horse acknowledged himself beaten.

"How long have we been gone, Olney?"

He looked at his watch and said: "Just forty minutes. Now, we will have a little talk together, Winnie. That's what I brought you out here for. I knew the rest of the company would be suspicious if they saw us talking together. I thought this was the best way out of it. That Mr. Scales is right. They will get their injunction and we shall be left here without a dollar."

"Well, what are we going to do?" she asked.

"Why not stay here?" was the reply. "I should be sorry to have you part with that engagement ring while the prospect of my being able to buy another one is so poor, but you must live and you would have to pawn it if you went back to New York. You can live here very much cheaper."

"But where can you pawn or sell it?" asked Winnie. "I can't do it as well as you can."

"I've got an idea in my head," and he whispered something to her. She smiled. He whispered some more; then she laughed heartily. His concluding words caused her to exclaim:

"Oh, what a joke! What fun that will be! Do you think you can carry it out?"

"I know I can," was the reply. "I can act just as well off the stage as I can on — and I think better. Now, Winnie, have you pluck enough to drive this horse back to Snickersville?"

"He won't try to run away again, will he?"

"No indeed; you needn't have any fear of that. You may be obliged to touch him up with the whip. Just before you get back to the hotel, throw that strip of cowhide into the bushes. I don't wish Riccadonna to know my little game. I'll get out here. I used to live in the next town — about a quarter of a mile off — when I was a boy, and I shall be among friends in half an hour."

He jumped from the carriage, and gave Winnie directions as to the turns in the road. Their hands met; then he drew her face down towards his own:

"It may be a long time before I see you again, Winnie."

"I understand," she said. "There, take it and be off."

Their lips met, and, an instant later, Winnie was driving towards Snickersville and Olney Dangerfield was walking towards the town in which his youth had been spent.

Winnie was a long distance from the hotel when she threw the strip of cowhide into the bushes. She found the company gathered upon the piazza, dressed in their best, awaiting her return. Mr. Riccadonna was there, and he held up his hands in amazement when he saw Winnie driving back alone.

"How did he behave himself?" he asked.

"Splendidly," said Winnie; "he didn't go fast enough to suit Mr. Dangerfield. I think we ought to have taken a whip with us."

"Whip?" cried Mr. Riccadonna. "Why, the last time he was struck with a whip he ran away, threw out two men, and smashed the carriage all to pieces."

"He must have reformed," was Winnie's only comment, as she came up on the piazza.

"Where's Mr. Dangerfield?" asked Miss Dumaesque.

"I think he's gone to look for a lawyer," said Winnie. "Is it time to go to the hearing?"

"Very nearly," said Rosa, "and Mr. Riccadonna is going with us. He said he would be right back as soon as he had put up the horse, and, do you know, he has been telling us about his past life. Why, his real name is Bob Brady, and he used to be in a minstrel company for years. He says we ought to have a lawyer to take charge of our case, for that Mr. Barnett is a very shrewd man."

"Well," replied Winnie, "I never played Portia in the Merchant of Venice, but I have always wished that I could. I think this is my opportunity, and if you ladies and gentlemen have no objections, I will undertake the defence. Of course, I shall make no charge for my services, whether we win or are defeated."

"I am sure," said Miss Dumaesque, "that we could ask for no better terms. While you are making your argument, Miss Cholmondeley and I will look as downcast

as possible, and perhaps this Squire Rodgers will be sympathetic."

"Bring your hemlock wine along," said Mr. Steele, "and if we lose our case, we'll all commit suicide upon the spot. Better die at once than starve by inches, as we shall if we have to depend upon the charity of the Ebenezers."

CHAPTER XXII

THE LAW'S DELAYS

THE members of the burlesque company, taught by long experience in their profession, that promptness is a virtue, and tardiness subject to fine, reached Squire Rodgers' residence a few minutes before ten o'clock.

Each had thought that the injunction case, on account of its importance, would be the first one called, but they were destined to learn that they had made a grievous mistake. Court was held weekly, on Thursday, and there were, at least, forty persons present when they arrived.

"Won't it be nice?" said Miss Dumaresque to Mr. Steele. "Everybody here will be sure to be at the show to-night."

"I am afraid not," was Mr. Steele's reply. "Court loungers get so many sensations for nothing that they're not inclined to pay for anything."

Court was held in Squire Rodgers' front parlor. It was a very large room, provided with settees, and a platform had been built so that the Judge could easily see all the occupants of the room.

At exactly quarter past ten the Justice entered the room. All who were sitting arose and remained standing until the Judge had taken his seat, and Mr. Scales had pounded upon the floor with his large, oaken walking-stick, and declared the court open.

The Justice put on his glasses and carefully scrutinized a pile of documents upon his table.

"The first business before the court," said he, "is to hear the report of the physician in regard to the death, by accident, of the late Mr. Phineas Pray."

Dr. Danby arose, and after clearing his throat, began :
"I called upon Mr. Peter Gamage and he gave me the particulars of the accident — "

"Is Mr. Gamage here?" interrupted the Judge. "If he is, I should like to hear the story from his own lips."

A score of heads were turned towards a heavily built man, who sat upon one of the rear seats. Then followed that hum of indistinguishable voices, which showed that the man inquired about was present.

"Mr. Scales," said the Judge, "bring that man before me."

When the constable arrived with the witness, the Judge said, sternly :

"Now, Mr. Gamage, tell me all you know about this affair."

Mr. Gamage took the tobacco from his mouth and dropped it into his big, broad-brimmed hat.

"Wall 'twarn't none of my seekin'," Mr. Gamage began. "I got panted wire fences all around my lots to keep fools out, but the town reggerlations lets 'em walk in the road and mind other folks's business."

"Keep to the point, Mr. Gamage," remarked the Judge.

"Wall, I got a permit from the selectmen to blast some rocks on my place, on the North road. I put up signs, accordin' to law, warnin' strangers, but that 'ere feller came along and began talkin' to me just as my boy Lysander and Bat Mulvey was puttin' the blast in. He said he sung in the choir over in Willoughby, but he said he didn't like the place. Thought he'd like to settle down in our town. Just then, Lys called out that he'd set off the fuse, and I knew it was time to git. I yelled to the feller to come, too, and we three ran like all possessed. But, do you know, Judge — " Mr. Gamage in his excitement

clapped his hat, regardless of its contents, on his bald head — “do you know, Jedge,” he repeated, “that confounded fool opened his umbrella and stood there just like a stuck pig. Lys told me afterwards that a rock that must have weighed nigh on to three ton went up in the air ’til ’twarn’t no bigger than a canteloop. Then we all three yelled to him to look out for kingdom-come. I knew the rock had got to come — and it did — and that’s the last we seed on him. Almost the last words he said to me was that he’d made up his mind to settle in this ’ere town — and he has. And that’s all I know about it.”

Without waiting for the Judge’s permission to retire, he stalked up the aisle, hat on head, and resumed his seat.

“That will do, Mr. Gamage,” said the Judge, apparently unaware of the disappearance of the witness. “Have you made a post-mortem yet, Doctor Danby?”

“No, your honor, not yet. It took three yoke of oxen to move the rock. The umbrella was in fairly good condition, but we haven’t found enough of the man yet to warrant an examination.”

“The court will hear your report, Doctor Danby, whenever you’re ready. The next case is assault and battery. Bernard Quirk, complainant; Patrick Bogan, defendant.”

Mr. Quirk arose and came forward without being summoned. His right eye was closed and his face bore conclusive evidence that he had received a severe pommeling.

“What have you to say, Mr. Quirk?”

“All I know about it, your honor, is that Pat came up to me and says something that I don’t renfember, and I says something, but I forget what it was, and the next minute we were at it.”

“What was the trouble about?” asked the Judge.

“I don’t know, your honor. I think ye’d better ask Pat.”

Mr. Patrick Bogan came forward.

"What did you strike Mr. Quirk for?" asked the Judge.

"Bridget can tell ye's."

Mrs. Bridget Bogan took her place beside her husband.

"Now, Mrs. Bogan," said the Judge, "can you tell us what caused the trouble?"

"'Deed I can, and none better. You see, my son Mike died last week, and his friends—and no young man had more of them—sent flowers and bouquets. That man," and she pointed at Mr. Quirk, "sent a pick —"

"No, it wasn't," cried Mr. Quirk. "It was an anchor."

"I know better," cried Mrs. Bogan. "It was a pick — jest because my poor Mike worked on the railroad."

The Judge addressed Mr. Quirk: "Were you and the late Mr. Michael Bogan good friends?"

"We were, yer honor. He owed me a dollar and a half when he died."

The Judge ruminated: "There seems to be some misunderstanding about the proper interpretation of the meaning of the floral emblem. Mr. Bogan, you are fined one dollar and costs."

"Two dollars and a quarter," said Mr. Scales.

Mrs. Bogan took a small leather bag from the bosom of her dress and counted out the amount in small change. As she turned away from the Judge's table, she shook her clenched hand in Mr. Quirk's face and cried:

"It was a pick — you know it was. That black eye of yours cost me two dollars and a quarter, but it's worth the money."

When quiet was restored, the next case was called.

"Van Loo versus Coffee," read the Judge. "This case was postponed from last week, owing to the fact that the plaintiff was so overcome by nervous prostration that she was unable to be present. Who appears for the plaintiff?"

"I do, your honor," said Mr. Barnett. "My client is still under the care of Doctor Danby. I presented the case to your honor last week. Professor Coffee broke into her room, used profane language, and Miss Van Loo has been unable to attend to her business as dressmaker since the occasion, and has suffered much financial loss thereby."

"I will hear Professor Coffee," said the Judge.

The Professor, who had been sitting upon two chairs, came forward, slowly. He was a very large man — elephantine in build.

"Have you any explanation to offer?" asked the Judge.

The Professor's voice was thin and squeaky, ill-befitting such a ponderous mass of humanity.

"Your honor," he began, "I am in the habit of drinking two gallons of spring water every night to reduce my weight, and my wife, Mary Ann, can prove it. That night it happened something stuck in my throat. I thought I'd swallowed a frog. I told Mary Ann. She advised me to stand on my head and cough it up."

"You haven't told about the door," cried a feminine voice from a back seat.

"Oh, yes, your honor, between the room occupied by Mary Ann and myself was a door which led into Miss Van Loo's room. We always supposed it was locked, because the keyhole was stuffed full of paper. I got on my head all right, but I toppled over. My feet went against the door, and I fell into Miss Van Loo's room — and her pet dog bit me three times. I only swore once, and that was between the second and third bites."

"Did you know that Miss Van Loo's room was next to yours?"

"No," said the Professor, "I didn't know it was her room until I got up and saw her false hair and store teeth on the bureau."



MISS VAN LOO AND PROFESSOR COFFEE

"I object," said Mr. Barnett. "The witness's language is insulting to my client."

"It's the truth and I can prove it," came in shrill tones from the back seat.

The Judge was a clear-headed, sensible magistrate.

"Professor Coffee," said he, "seems to be a candid and amiable man, and really, I can see no reason why, after this explanation of the accident—for it was not a premeditated assault—Miss Van Loo should feel injured, and expect to receive any financial compensation."

"I will confer with my client," said Mr. Barnett, "and if she decides to prosecute the case further —"

"You can enter your appeal next week, Mr. Barnett."

The Judge then turned to Mr. Scales :

"Has proper notice been given that the estate of Timothy Atwood is to be sold at auction, taxes not having been paid for the last three years?"

"Everybody in town knows it," said Mr. Scales.

"After court is adjourned, I will make out the proper papers, Mr. Scales. Any other business to come before this court?"

Dr. Danby arose : "Your honor, I hold in my hand a petition, signed by Mr. Solomon Dalton, asking that an inquiry be made into the mental condition of Miss Martha Atwood. The petitioner avers that this Miss Atwood, who has a child about four years of age, persists in calling herself Mrs. Martha Dalton, claiming that she was married five years ago to the son of your petitioner, and that she has failed to produce any legal proof of said marriage, when requested to do so. The document is quite long, your honor, but that is the gist of it."

The Judge took the paper, saying, as he did so :

"I will look into the matter, Doctor Danby, and render my decision at the next session of this court."

"Wouldn't this be funny in a play?" Miss Dumaesque asked of Mr. Steele.

"I don't think so," said he. "Most people have trouble enough of their own, without paying money to see other people miserable."

Winnifred turned to Mr. Dodd: "Do you know, if I had the money, I'd pay that old man's taxes, and I'd fight that Doctor Danby. I hate the sight of him."

A fine looking young man, not over thirty years of age, came forward and bowed to the Judge. It was the Rev. Franklin Merrill, Pastor of the Snickersville Union Church.

"Your honor, there is in this town an organization known as the Ebenezer Moral Reform Society. Its avowed object is to improve the morals of the community by preventing the lodgment in, or the driving from it, of all persons, practices, or performances which may be considered prejudicial. I am a member of this Society, holding the office, therein, of secretary. Deacon Solomon Dalton, Miss Abigail March, his wife's sister, and Mr. Abel Barnett, all respected members of my church, have been appointed a committee by this Society, to which I was joined by virtue of my position, to pray for an injunction to prevent any further performances in this town by a dramatic company known as Hix's Cosmopolitan Corinthian Burlesque Company, and they are prepared to present evidence which will show good reasons why this injunction should be granted."

"At last!" gasped Winnie.

"Isn't he handsome?" said Miss Dumaesque to Miss Cholmondeley.

"He's not my style, at all," was the reply.

CHAPTER XXIII

A MODERN PORTIA

THE persons whose cases had been settled, their friends who had been interested in the outcome, and many loungers whose curiosity had been satisfied, or who had felt the warning sensations of hunger, had by this time left the court room.

Judge Rodgers took out his silver timepiece and looked at its open face :

"I am sorry to keep you waiting, ladies and gentlemen, but my dinner is always ready at this hour, and Mrs. Rodgers is a very particular woman. I can be back in half an hour, or I will adjourn the court until one o'clock, if any of you want to go home to dinner."

Mr. Dodd became spokesman for the company :

"Your honor, members of the dramatic profession never eat dinner at noon. We usually take a late breakfast about that hour."

Miss March sniffed : "Brother and I always have our dinner at twelve o'clock, like sensible people, but both of us are willing to starve if it will help the Moral Reform Society."

"Will it be necessary for me to remain?" asked the Rev. Mr. Merrill. "Mr. Barnett has been engaged as counsel."

"Do you wish to testify?"

"Oh, no," replied the clergyman. "I was not present at the entertainment and could say nothing except from hearsay."

The Judge beckoned to the clergyman, who approached him. The Judge whispered something in his ear. Mr.

Merrill smiled, nodded, and the two gentlemen left the room together.

"He's got an invitation to dinner," said Idaline to Winnie. "I should think ordinary politeness would have included us."

"Oh, no," said Winnie, "criminals are not allowed to be on intimate terms with the judge."

"I was reading about a lawyer the other day," said Rosa. "He made a speech, and one of the things he said was — It is often better to know the judge than to know the law."

At that moment a stranger entered the court room, and attentively surveyed each occupant. He was attired in a suit of seedy black, much too small for him, and wore a silk hat, which had, evidently, not been in contact with the hat-brush for years. His hair was black, as was his long, unkempt beard. In one hand he carried a green cotton umbrella, and in the other a small leathern bag. After having scrutinized the company to his satisfaction, he asked :

"Is Deacon Solomon Dalton here ?"

"There he is," said Scales, pointing to the Deacon, who was engaged in an animated conversation with his sister-in-law.

The stranger approached them : "Do I address Deacon Dalton ? My name is Pudley — Jedediah Pudley — I am from Peachley."

Mr. Pudley extended his hand, but the Deacon drew back and looked at him suspiciously. Mr. Pudley felt that he needed a stronger credential than his name :

"Our minister over to Peachley said I would do well to seek out Deacon Solomon Dalton when in Snickersville."

The Deacon thought for a moment : "Oh, Elder Cutts. He's a great worker. I met him once at a revival meeting."

Mr. Pudley felt that his feet were on firmer ground. "Yes, Elder Cutts. We're all workers in the same vineyard, Deacon; but often the harvest is scarce. Oh! Glory to faith!"

The Deacon took the outstretched hand. "And you said your name was —?"

"Pudley — Jedediah Pudley. I am a visiting brother. I spend most of my time visiting."

Mr. Scales whispered in Plum Gifford's ear: "Looking for a chance for a good feed."

"Visiting the prominent workers in the cause," added Mr. Pudley.

"Wall," said the Deacon, "I am right glad to see ye, Brother Pudley. This is my sister-in-law, Miss March."

Mr. Pudley removed his plug hat and made a profound bow. Miss March eyed him as though he were a hawk circling about her chicken-coop.

"Excuse me, Mr. Pudley, for not introducin' you sooner. I didn't know but what ye was some pedler of horse liniment, or patent axle grease. Come, set down."

When they were seated, the Deacon again took up the conversation:

"How is the Elder?"

Mr. Pudley hung his umbrella upon the back of the settee before him, placed his outstretched hands upon his knees, and leaned forward.

"He continues to retain a reasonable amount of bodily vigor, and is held in great esteem in Peachley. I attended his annual donation party last week. He was the recipient of many marks of the appreciation in which he is held. There were five pair of socks, two razor strops, a patent mouse-trap, a bushel and a half of beans, a package of hen food, and a copy of Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy. One of the sisters brought him a peck of dried apples and a

bottle of home-made liniment for rheumatism. Another told him how to make soft-soap."

"I am glad he is doin' so well," remarked the Deacon. "Elder Cutts is a very nice man. He deserves every bit of it."

While this conversation had been going on, Miss March had put on her spectacles and looked over the tops of them at Mr. Pudley. She remained quiet longer than was natural with her.

"Be you related to Amos Pudley, of Todd Holler?"

Mr. Pudley hesitated: "I—I—I believe I am,m'am — distantly."

"Well," said Miss March, bringing her umbrella down upon the floor with a bang that caused Mr. Pudley to put both feet under the settee, "the distanter the better. From what I heerd, he's no better than a horse thief."

Mr. Pudley thought it best to change the subject. He opened his little leathern bag.

"My dear sister, I have here some tracts which I am distributing. Will you have one? It is entitled: Brands of Remorse; or, The Turning Worm."

They had been so busily engaged in conversation that they had not noticed the return of the Judge, who had entered, accompanied by Mr. Merrill. Mr. Scales touched the Deacon on the shoulder:

"There's the Jedge. Reckon he's goin' to bring your case right on, Deacon."

Mr. Merrill took a seat in front of Deacon Dalton.

"Elder Merrill," said the Deacon, "this is Brother Pudley, from Peachley."

"You've arrived just in time, Brother Pudley, to hear a very interesting case," remarked the clergyman.

"What is it, murder?" asked Mr. Pudley.

"Oh, no," said the clergyman, "not physical murder,

but moral homicide. Probably you are not aware that there is an organization in this town called the Ebenezer Moral Reform Society, which is largely made up of the members of my congregation. Its object is the suppression of vice in all its forms, and the promotion and encouragement of pure morals and good conduct in this community, more especially among the young."

"Glory to faith!" ejaculated Mr. Pudley. "I'm glad I've found a moral town. I shall feel at home here. Notwithstanding Elder Cutt's earnest endeavors, Peachley is a pretty tough place. I stopped giving out tracts there when I found they used 'em for cigarette wrappers. Perhaps the name led 'em astray—Brands for the Burning; or, the Turning Worm. Will you have one, Elder? But who's going to be tried to-day?"

Elder Merrill explained: "A theatrical company appeared at our Town Hall and gave an entertainment which, I understand, is considered in many respects, opposed to the moral standard which our Society is struggling to maintain. They, therefore, have made a formal application for an injunction that will prevent an exhibition which was contemplated for this evening."

The Judge rapped upon his table, and Constable Scales called the court to order.

Mr. Barnett, who, during the interim, had been carefully examining some legal documents, arose:

"Your honor, the first witness I shall put upon the stand is Miss Abigail March."

Miss March, umbrella in hand, took up her position at the corner of the Judge's table. Mr. Barnett then proceeded to examine the witness:

"Did you see the show, last night?"

"Yes, I did!" said Miss March, and each word exploded like a torpedo.

Deacon Dalton must have thought he was in church, for he said loud enough for all to have heard him :

"To our shame and sorrer."

"Oh ! Glory to faith !" ejaculated Mr. Pudley.

Mr. Scales pounded upon the floor with his walking-stick: "Silence in court !"

Mr. Barnett continued his examination : "Are you in the habit of attending theatrical entertainments ?"

"No, I am not," said Miss March decidedly. "We imperilled our souls, but it was for a good purpose."

"We are proceeding a little out of the order," remarked the Judge. "Is the charge brought against the whole company, or some particular member of it ?"

Mr. Barnett read from a document which he held in his hand : "And we do pray that Miss Winnifred Winton, and other members of the Cosmopolitan, Corinthian Burlesque Company, be enjoined —"

"That will do," remarked the Judge. "Is Miss Winton in court ?"

Winnifred arose and walked slowly down the aisle, every eye in the court room fixed upon her.

"Isn't she a daisy ?" asked Plum Gifford, giving Eben Wilkes a nudge as he spoke.

"She's an angel !" said the lawyer's clerk, in a whisper.

Winnifred stood at the other end of the Judge's table, facing Miss March.

Deacon Dalton arose : "I want to say, Jedge, that I don't think this is the one. The one we see had yaller hair, all fluffy 'round the ears, and a big curl hangin' down her back."

Miss March scowled at her brother-in-law.

"Wall, she don't look a mite like her, Abby ; not a mite."

As the Deacon sat down, Mr. Pudley arose: "If I might be allowed to make a few remarks —"

Down came Mr. Scales' wand of office: "Silence in court!"

"Your name is Miss Winnifred Winton?" asked the Judge.

"Yes, sir," said Winnie.

"Mr. Barnett," said the Judge, "I will interrogate the witnesses. Later on, the court will listen to your arguments. Deacon Dalton, what did you see at the entertainment that you considered objectionable?"

The Deacon did not reply until he found himself in close proximity to his determined sister-in-law.

"Wall, Jedge, I sot back quite a way from the rostrum, and didn't get the grist o' the hull of it, bein' kinder hard o' hearin', but there was kissin' goin' on right out open."

The members of the burlesque company, who were on the back seat, laughed loudly, and Winnie had to turn her face away to conceal an irrepressible smile.

"Glory be praised!" ejaculated Mr. Pudley.

"She knows it's true," said Miss March. "See her hide her face."

A voice called out: "Did you hide yours, Abby?" and the question provoked another peal of laughter.

"Go on with your testimony, Deacon Dalton," said the Judge.

"Wall, there was a young feller walkin' round on the rostrum, an' he had a feather in his hat, and a red, shimmering jacket, and a sword adanglin'. Wall, he put his arm round this one —" and he looked at Winnie — "if this is the one, but it don't seem to me —"

"Yes, 'tis!" said Miss March, explosively.

"Wall," continued the Deacon, "he squeezed her right up to him, and then he let drive right onto her mouth, three or four times."

Miss March could not be repressed:

"I saw it, jest as Brother Solomon tells it. He had his arm, 'round her. It was shameful!"

Winnie turned to the Judge: "Will you please request Deacon Dalton and Miss March to show the court just how the kissing was done?"

Plum Gifford called out: "Ruther take the young lady, wouldn't yer, Deacon?"

"Silence in court!" screamed Mr. Scales. "Do ye think yer at a barn raisin'?"

Judge Rodgers maintained his dignity. "Well, is that all?"

"No, 'taint half," said Miss March. "Tell about the gown, Brother Solomon."

"Wall," said the Deacon, "she had on a gown that warn't a mite longer than down to there—" and he illustrated.

"'Twas higher than that," said Miss March.

"Wall, up to there."

"Why, Brother," said Miss March, "you know it was higher than that."

"Let Miss March show us," suggested Winnie.

Miss March tossed her head: "Well, I won't do it."

"Go on, Deacon," said the Judge.

The Deacon lifted his coat-tails with both hands:

"Then she held out her gown like this, with one hand, and she whirled her red parasol with t'other, and then she kicked and capered all around the rostrum."

"Don't forget the song," suggested Miss March.

"Oh, yes," said the Deacon. "She sung a song, and twixt the verses she'd wink."

"And the words of the song wasn't fit to hear," added Miss March.

"They were dreadful," said the Deacon. "Everybody was alaughin' an' anudgin'."

"What was the song about, Deacon?" asked the Judge.

"Wall, as near as I could foller it, it was about an inner-cent girl that left her home and had some golden hair ahangin' down her back."

"I see nothing wrong about that," was the Judge's comment.

"I declare, Brother Solomon," cried Miss March, "ye ain't makin' nothin' of this case at all. Why, Judge, it was scandalous! She had that parasol atwirlin' and her skirts ajigglin', and she sung something like this:

Jane, Jane, doesn't look the same;
When she left the village she was shy,
But alas and alack, she came back
With a naughty little wiggle in her eye."

Mr. Scales' efforts were ineffectual in suppressing the uproar which followed. When quiet came naturally, the Judge asked:

"Is this all the evidence your Society has to present, Elder Merrill?"

"I hope so," said that gentleman.

Mr. Pudley arose; "Your honor, if I might be permitted to make a few remarks."

"What do you know about the case, sir?"

"Very little, sir," said Mr. Pudley, "in particular, but a good deal in general. I remember hearing of a case where a man climbed a tall fence, after dark, and stole the milk that a neighbor had left out in the trough for his pigs. After it had got sour he used to take it over and sell it to the neighbor for his chickens."

"You may sit down, sir," said the Judge, sternly. "Mr. Barnett, we will listen to your closing argument."

"May it please your honor," said the lawyer, "the lady and gentlemen who represent the Ebenezer Moral Reform Society, and who form a committee, authorized to apply

for this injunction, are persons of probity and hold the highest reputations in this community. I do not think I can say anything which can add strength to their testimony, and I am willing to submit our case as it stands."

"Is the defence represented by counsel?" asked the Judge.

"With your honor's permission," said Winnie, "I will appear in behalf of the company of which I am a member. I have never been in such a moral town before, and hardly know how to proceed with my defence; but, as Shakespeare says, with honest men :

The quality of justice is not strained.

It droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven — upon the innocent. We have played this piece for the last four weeks, to large and enthusiastic audiences. Life was like a summer day until we reached this town—then came a frost. I have tried to understand it, and have come to the conclusion that it is the place and the people, and not the play. In the words of the great Latin poet :

"It is impossible to write a play that will suit all classes of people.

"Allow me to remark, your honor, that we had intended to close our season here, and one night, more or less, will make very little difference to us."

As Miss Winton took her seat, the Judge became the centre of attraction. He arose :

"I have heard the evidence and the arguments on both sides ; as our learned sister has put the case, it is the place and the people. What suits the City of New York may not be palatable to us ; and what suits us might probably be unpalatable to New York. Governed by these considerations, I feel obliged to grant the injunction prayed for ; but —" and he looked toward Winnie — "I regret that I did not see the performance myself, and that my

own official act prevents me from witnessing, this evening, what must have been a most amusing and enjoyable performance.

“Mr. Scales, declare this court adjourned until next Thursday at ten o'clock in the morning.”

CHAPTER XXIV

A FRIEND IN NEED

IF one had looked into the dining-room of Riccadonna's boarding-house, about six o'clock on the day the injunction was granted, he never would have thought that the members of the burlesque company there present were the victims of adverse fortune. Despite the legal reverse with which they had met, they were, apparently, in the best of spirits.

"Let's get up a Sunday night concert — a sacred concert," suggested Mr. Steele.

"Oh, that would never do," said Miss Cholmondeley. "They would never let us have the Town Hall for any such purpose. As Mr. Scales said this morning, those Ebenezers run the town, and, if we don't look out, we may get tarred and feathered."

"Why not give it Saturday night?" said Mr. Dodd. "You have your *prima donna* dress with you, Miss Cholmondeley. Take it out and give your trunk a holiday."

"I wish you to understand, Mr. Dodd," retorted Miss Cholmondeley, "that taking one dress out of my trunk would not give it a holiday. What do you think of his remark, Mr. Steele?"

"If I took a suit out of my trunk and a rat fell in, he would break his neck," was the response.

"Has anything been heard from Colonel Hix or Mr. Thoroughbrace?" asked Winnifred.

"Not a word," said Mr. Dodd. "I did think of going over to Willoughby and telegraphing to New York, but gave it up for two reasons; firstly, I had no money; and,

secondly, I knew the Colonel would answer only at my expense, and then I would be in a hole, sure."

"What are we going to do?" asked Miss Dumaesque, in a whisper. "Our board is running on, and Mr. Riccadonna will present his bill very soon."

"Oh, they will put us all in jail," said Mr. Steele. "I believe that's the custom in this town. When I was in the court room to-day I thought it must be about 1670. You know, they used to fine husbands for kissing their wives on Sunday, and perhaps that's the reason they are so down on kissing in this town."

"But that doesn't answer my question," persisted Miss Dumaesque. "What are we going to do? We must do something."

"I'll tell you," said Miss Cholmondeley. "I move that we go out on the piazza and delight the community by singing them some good, old-fashioned songs to which they can take no exception."

"Second the motion," cried Mr. Steele, and in a short time, they were comfortably ensconced in arm-chairs and rocking-chairs on the broad piazza.

"I think this is perfectly lovely," said Miss Dumaesque; "so quiet, so pastoral! I almost wish I had been born a country girl."

"But were you not a country girl in the play?" asked Mr. Dodd.

"Oh, that's only playing it. I mean one in real earnest."

"I'll tell you what to do, Miss Dumaesque," said Mr. Steele. "I'll go and get my heavy cane to use as a means of defence if we meet a bull or a wild steer, and we will go and take a stroll. The moonbeams play on hill and dale," he quoted, as he went upstairs to get his walking-stick.

Winnifred looked up to the star-gemmed sky, made still

more refulgent by the moonlight: "Do you remember those lines in the *Merchant of Venice*, Miss Cholmondeley?" and she repeated:

"Sit, Jessica, see how the floor of heaven,
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold."

"I took the liberty to bring down your coat and hat," said Mr. Steele, as he emerged from the doorway.

"I have two arms," said Mr. Dodd, extending them; "one for Miss Cholmondeley and one for Miss Winton. Shall we accompany them? Miss Winton has lost her knight, or I should not be obliged to offer myself in sections."

"Thanks for your invitation," said Winnifred, "but I will not become that superfluous person—an odd one. I will sit here and have the moonlight night for company."

She watched the party until it disappeared. "They forgot all about the songs," mused Winnie. She sat quietly for a long time, but her thoughts were busy. What a strange life she had led. She had been virtually born to the stage, for her father and mother were both actors at the time of her birth. Her mother had told her that when but an infant, her stage life had begun. Winnie could not remember that early part of her existence, but she did recall dancing with a company of little boys and girls when she was but five. At eight years of age, she had played boys' parts and, during every year of her life, the greater part of each had been spent upon the mimic stage.

Her mother had died when she was fourteen and she had been her father's inseparable companion up to the time of his death, which had taken place four years later. She was then eighteen years old. She had found good friends, but none had been more kind to her than Olney Dangerfield. The year before, they had played in a com-

pany together. At the end of the season, he had told her that he loved her and had placed upon her finger a valuable diamond ring as the evidence of their engagement. The past season had been an unsuccessful one, and now they were both stranded, without money, in an obscure, country town.

Was the life which she had led the one for which she was best fitted? It had had its triumphs and its sorrows — yes, too, its degradations. A hot flush, not of shame but of indignation, came to her face as she thought of the part she had been obliged to play that day in the court room. To think that she had been obliged to listen to the declaration from the lips of the justice that the play in which she had appeared was immoral. Such an idea would not have entered the mind of a spectator in any large city. Then, she reflected that the code of morals varies in different countries, and why should it not in different parts of the same country? “After all, they were right,” she soliloquized. “I will get out of this life if I can; but, if I do, how can I make a living?”

Then her thoughts reverted to those scenes in the court room in which she had not been a participant, but only a looker-on. Somebody was to be evicted from his homestead because his taxes had not been paid. Perhaps he was an old, white-haired man, and it would break his heart to be taken away from the home which he loved so well, and be forced to pass his days in the poorhouse. How she wished that she had the money to pay his taxes and make him happy once more, and then there was that poor girl — a crazy girl — who was to be examined by the stern looking doctor, and if he decided that she was insane, she would be sent to some asylum. That would be worse than death, and there was no one in the town to help them. If there had been, they would have helped them before this.

She became so excited that she arose and walked rapidly from one end of the piazza to the other. What foolishness! She would go to bed and forget all about it. She lay awake for a long time, for she could not banish from her mind the pictures which she had conjured up. She dozed, then awoke suddenly. She heard voices. They were singing "The Old Folks at Home," and how sweet it sounded, as the melody came floating in through the window. Her companions had returned. She was soon asleep and knew no more until the rays of the morning sun fell upon her face and awakened her.

The members of the company were not in a particularly happy frame of mind when they gathered upon the piazza the next morning after breakfast. The joke had gone too far. Matters were becoming serious. Mr. Riccadonna was a good-natured man, but he could not afford to make a permanent addition of five members to his family with no prospect of payment for their board or lodging. Winnie had determined, as a last resort, to offer him the diamond ring in payment. But of what use would it be to him? In Snickersville, a pitchfork or a rake was worth more than a diamond ring.

Miss Dumaresque's quick eye caught sight of Mr. Scales coming up the road. "Here's the mail-carrier," she cried. "Perhaps he has a letter for us from Colonel Hix or Mr. Thoroughbrace, and our troubles will be ended."

"Good mornin', folks," said Mr. Scales, as he mounted the steps. "Things turned out 'bout as I told yer yesterday, didn't they? I told yer the Ebenezers run this town. 'Tain't no use to buck agin 'em. The parson we had here afore Mr. Merrill come tried to fight 'em, but they just cut off his salary. He lived on nothin' as long as he could and then he had to git out. If Elder Merrill hadn't gone into court yesterday and taken sides agin yer, they would've bounced him just the same."

"Have you got any letters for us?" asked Mr. Steele.

"There ain't no letters, but I've got a bundle of papers here for a man named S. Steele. Can't make out what his fust name is 'cept the S."

"I am the man," said Mr. Steele, and he grasped the package.

"Not quite yet," said Mr. Scales. "Yer see, I ain't a regular Uncle Sam mail-carrier. I do this business on my own account, just to accommodate. I go 'round and take up the letters and such at stated pints, and when I come back from Willoughby, I bring the mail and leave it at stated pints, and I git two cents for each letter and one cent for each paper. I must have something to live on, for I've got a sister Tildy, and she's been bedridden 'most six months and I've had to hire most of the work done."

Mr. Steele fumbled in his pocket and, after a while, found a five cent piece. Mr. Scales deliberately counted out four cents in change and with a "Thank you, sir," took his departure.

"Well, you are fortunate," said Mr. Dodd. "Who sent them to you, Sid?"

"Well, the fact is," said Mr. Steele, "about ten days ago, I wrote to a friend of mine in New York to send me some New York papers to Snickersville, New Hampshire, and, for a wonder, he didn't forget it."

"Oh, Mr. Steele, do let us hear what is going on in the world," cried Miss Dumaresque.

"Happy to accommodate," said that young gentleman, as he opened one of the papers. "By George!" he exclaimed, "what a scare-head: Disappearance of a Beautiful Young Lady! Is it Murder? She had a Large Sum of Money with her! Her Parents Stricken with Grief!"

"Why, who can it be?" the ladies cried in unison.

"It doesn't tell in the big type," said Mr. Steele. "Wait

a minute and I'll find out. Oh, here it is. Miss Ida Day, of Irvington-on-Hudson."

Hardly had the words escaped from his lips when Miss Dumaresque arose to her feet. Every particle of color had left her cheeks, which were as white as snow. She tried to speak, but no words escaped her. Then she tottered and fell back into the rocking-chair in a swoon. Mr. Steele sprang to his feet :

"Shall I go for the doctor?"

"I don't think it will be necessary," said Winnie. "She has fainted, but if you will carry her up to her room, I think Miss Cholmondeley and I can revive her."

When Mr. Steele came down stairs, he found Mr. Dodd waiting for him at the door :

"Sid, don't you think I'd better go for the doctor?"

"There's one very good reason why not. Who's going to pay him?"

"Well," said Mr. Dodd, "anyway, I'll go down to the stable and have a horse hitched up so as to be ready in case of need."

Mr. Steele took up the newspaper which had caused the trouble and read the article attentively.

In the chamber above, strange events were taking place. Miss Dumaresque's garments were loosened and cold water and smelling-salts were brought into requisition. In the bosom of the girl's dress, Winnie found a small bag of pink silk, which she laid upon the bureau.

In a short time, Miss Dumaresque opened her eyes, and, for a wonder, did not ask, "Where am I?" Instead, her motions seemed to indicate that she had missed the little bag and was searching for it.

"Here it is," said Winnie, as she passed it to her.

"Please open it," said Miss Dumaresque. "You will then know my story."

Winnie complied and took from the bag a roll of bills.

"Please count it," said Idaline.

"One thousand dollars!" cried Winnie.

Yes, there were ten crisp one hundred dollar bills. Winnie and Rosa looked at Idaline with astonishment depicted on their faces.

"I am better now," said Idaline. "Let me get up and sit in that easy-chair. Then I will tell you all. Of course, you know," she began, "that Idaline Dumaresque is not my real name. The names that you are known by are probably not your own, but have been assumed for the occasion, as was mine. Colonel Hix tried to find out what my real name was, but I would not tell him, for I was afraid that something would come out in the papers."

Winnie and Rosa sat expectantly. They had learned but little as yet.

"My real name is Ida Day. My father's name is Edgar Day, and he is the wealthiest man in Irvington. I had taken part in a great many amateur theatricals and had a passion to go upon the stage. My father and mother, if left to themselves, would not have antagonized my wishes, but my Aunt Ida, for whom I was named, bitterly opposed the idea. Oh," and a smile came to her pale face, "if you could see my Aunt Ida and that Miss March together, you would think they were twins. I was eighteen years old in January and came into possession of fifty thousand dollars left me by a dear aunt who loved me. Just before I left home, I drew this money from the bank. I hate money, but I know that it is useful sometimes. I made up my mind that I would not use it unless actually obliged to by force of circumstances. Of course, I must go right home, for I love my father and mother and do not wish to have them suffer on my account. I am so glad I have this money with me, for I can pay the board bill and the fares back to New York."

"Oh, that is so kind of you," cried Rosa.

An inspiration came to Winnie. "You say that you hate money, Miss Day. I love it—not for itself, but for what it will enable me to do. If I could exchange this diamond ring for some," and she held up her hand, "I would stay in this town all summer and give these Ebenezers a lesson in true Christianity and pure morality."

"How much is your ring worth?" asked Miss Day.

"Three hundred dollars," said Winnie. "I always carry the bill with me, for as you have learned, there are times when actors are obliged to pawn their valuables or sell them, in order to meet imperative demands. If I could have found any way of disposing of this ring, I should have been ahead of you, Miss Day, in offering to pay our bills and the fares home."

"I will let you have the three hundred dollars," said Miss Day, "but upon one condition—you must tell me your real name."

"Oh, I have no objections," said Winnie. "I am the only daughter of Walter and Emily Brown, and I was named after the celebrated French actress, Sarah Bernhardt. But I have a condition to make before taking the money. I wish only for a loan of two hundred dollars, for, if you are obliged to sell the ring, you probably could not get full price for it."

"I shall not sell it," said Miss Day. "I will keep it for you."

"As you are going to pay my board bill and fare home, Miss Day," said Rosa, "I suppose it is only fair that I should tell you who I am."

"I do not insist upon it."

"And for that reason," said Rosa, "I am perfectly willing to tell you. I was born in Canada, and my right name is Francine Mouton."

Miss Day laughed: "You must excuse me, but I understand French, and Mouton is such a funny name — it means sheep, you know."

"I know it does," said Rosa, "but when my parents came to the States, they changed it to Lamb, and until I went upon the stage, I was known by the name of Frances Lamb."

"Now," said Winnie, "everything is arranged and very happily, owing to your kindness, Miss Day. Now let me advise you to take a little nap while Rosa and I find out the amount of our indebtedness to Mr. Riccadonna, and when the next train starts, it will take you all back to New York — except me."

"When Winnie and Rosa reached the piazza, they found Mr. Steele still engaged in reading the paper.

"Oh, you can't imagine," cried Rosa, "what has taken place upstairs! Who do you think she is?"

"Oh, I know," said Mr. Steele, "and I told Dodd."

"But how did you find out?" cried Winnie.

Mr. Steele opened the newspaper and pointed to a half-tone portrait: "Don't you understand?"

The ladies nodded. The picture must have been made from a photograph of Miss Ida Day.

CHAPTER XXV

"OVER THE HILL TO THE POORHOUSE"

SATURDAY morning was cold, damp, and foggy, but Miss Day and those who were to accompany her to New York were up bright and early, for they were obliged to ride three miles to Willoughby in order to catch the seven o'clock train. Winnie joined them before breakfast was over. Actors, as a rule, are a light-hearted class, and why should not these four be happy when they knew that their board had been paid with a hundred dollar bill, which fact had obliged Mr. Riccadonna to scour the town and borrow sundry sums to make up the required change.

To be sure, Miss Day felt downcast whenever her thoughts reverted to her father and mother at home, grieving over her supposed death. But Mr. Steele had told her that, as soon as they reached Willoughby, a telegram could be sent to Irvington informing her parents that she was alive and well, and would soon be with them.

It was a merry party that got into the barge which Mr. Riccadonna had provided for the occasion. He held the ribbons himself, and the span of mettlesome horses, at a crack of the whip, started off at a brisk rate. Winnie stood upon the piazza, watching them and waving her handkerchief until they were out of sight. Then she sank into an arm-chair, feeling as though she had been left alone upon a sinking ship.

Now, for the first time, she realized that she had cut aloof from her friends and that, from now on, in the words of the old song, she must "paddle her own canoe." She knew that Olney was not far off, but what was his proximity to her when she was unable to see him daily and

talk to him, as had been her custom? Then she looked at the ringless finger and sighed. Next, she thought of the two one hundred dollar bills in her porte-monnaie. What was she to do with them? How much would it cost to help old Mr. Atwood in his extremity and save his daughter Martha from being sent to an insane asylum? These two results must be accomplished, if it took all the money she had; but, if it did, how was she to live during the long summer months?

Winnifred Winton was a brave girl, and, as she sat there, she decided that, if it took all of her money to do the good acts which she contemplated, she would work for her board until Olney came to deliver her from her bondage, for she felt sure that he would bring about this result in some way.

Winnie did not know how long she sat there musing, and thinking over the possible future events. She was aroused from her reverie by the sound of voices, and, looking up, saw two young men who were passing the house. She thought she recognized one of them, for she remembered that a young man with very red hair had sat in one of the front seats the night of the show. She leaned over quickly to pick up an invisible something from the piazza floor. When she resumed her former position, the young men had passed by. She did not know that she had been the subject of conversation between the young men before their arrival at the house and until they reached Mr. Barnett's law office. The latter was located in a small, one-story building, containing two rooms, known as the front and back office, one being used by the lawyer for private consultations with his clients, and having a rear door from which they could make their exits without being obliged to go through the front office, in which the loungers often congregated.

The young man with the bright red hair had been an occupant of a front seat at the show. It was Eben Wilkes, Mr. Barnett's assistant. His companion was Plummer Gifford.

"Say, Plum, isn't she a beauty. I think she looks prettier in every-day dress than she did on the stage. She don't need no paint nor powder to make her look handsome."

Plummer laughed: "Oh, Eben, every pretty girl that you see, you are dead struck on."

"Well, I ain't tied to one girl, as you are, Plum, but I wouldn't object if I could find one as nice and pretty as Mandy Harkins is."

"I'm satisfied," said Plum.

Eben was too well acquainted with Plum to venture to say anything more about his sweetheart. The whole town knew that Plummer Gifford was in love with Mandy Harkins, and they wondered why they were not engaged long ago. So Eben changed the subject:

"I think it's a shame, don't you, Plum, that they're goin' to turn old Grandsir' Atwood out of his house just because he's behind on his taxes? How in the world can they expect him to pay them when he can't work? Marthy has to dig away day and night to get enough to keep body and soul together."

"If I had the money," said Plum, "I would pay the bill mighty quick. I've saved up some to be sure, for a purpose that I don't care to talk about, and if it depended on me alone, I'd let him have it. But, you see, I've set my heart on gettin' married —"

Eben was all attention. He was going to find out now, and when he did, it would not be long before the whole town would know it. But he did not, for Plum said no more, and by that time they had reached Mr. Barnett's office.

Eben unlocked the door and the young men went in. Plum seated himself in an arm-chair which had been cut and hacked by the jack-knives of the loungers until it very much resembled the posts in front of Captain Milliken's store. Nearly all the cuts had been dulled by time and accumulated dust, but there were some fresh evidences of wood carving.

Eben threw open the windows to let in the fresh, sweet morning air and, in a very short time, had swept out both offices and dusted them in real man fashion.

Eben stood in the doorway when Plum looked up from the last week's issue of the *White Mountain Sun*, which he was reading, and called out: "Say, Eb, the paper says Lem Clough is shinglin' his barn this week."

"Who's doin' the work?" asked Eben.

"Paper don't say. Just hear this: Jason White's hog was killed last week. It dressed three hundred and twenty-seven pounds. That's a lie and I know it. That hog never weighed no sech figger."

"Have you got the figgers right?" asked Eben, and he stood where he could look at the paper over Plum's shoulder.

"See for yourself," said Plum; "three hundred and twenty-seven pounds."

"Well, you know, Plum, Jason is an awful blower."

"No discount on that, Eb. His hog is the biggest, his hoss is the fastest, and his dog can lick any dog in Snickersville. I heerd him say he'd bet his wife could knit a pair of socks in four hours."

Eben gave a loud laugh: "Not for Jase's feet. Besides, I'm willin' to bet a dollar he never wears 'em 'cept on Sundays."

Plum threw down the paper: "I'm waitin' for next week's *Sun* to see what the editor will say about the show.

Both on 'em were there — Donaldson and Fogg. I wonder which one will write about it. If Donaldson does, they will git it in the neck, sure."

"That's one o' the girls that set on the piazza as we came by," said Eben. "The others have gone home, I guess, for I seed four on 'em in the barge this morning, and Riccadonna was drivin' lickety-split towards Willoughby. I wonder what one stayed behind for? She was the one that played the Prince. I never told you afore, Plum, but I sot right near the front, and once when she was singin', she looked right at me and, by ginger, the more I think on it, the more I believe she winked at me."

A stout figure appeared in the doorway. It was Enoch Scales: "Ain't the Squire in yet?"

Eben shook his head: "'Tain't time for him for half an hour yet. He does some o' his work up to the house."

"Say, Enoch," asked Plum, "did you read about Jason White's hog — three hundred and twenty-seven pounds?"

Mr. Scales sniffed: "I'll show ye hogs. You wait 'til next year and I'll show ye some hogs, Plum, that'll make yer teeth ache. You just wait."

"Oh, I'll wait," said Plum.

Eben again reverted to the subject which was uppermost in his mind: "What d'yer think of the show, Enoch?"

"I wouldn't give shucks for it. I'd ruther see a good magic lantern show, sech as we used to have in the school-house."

Plum yawned: "Yaas, pictures from Pilgrim's Progress."

"No, I don't mean them," said Enoch. "They used to give us all kinds. I remember a picter once — a donkey and a man, and they shifted heads. By ginger! The funniest thing I ever seed."

"How did you come out up to Abel Cutter's? Find any liquor?" asked Plum.

"No. Searched the cellar and the barn. The old lady was sick, but we made her git up. Thought maybe there was some hid in the straw bed, but there wa'n't."

"Mis' Cutter's a nice old lady," said Plum. "Is she gettin' better?"

"Oh, she's all right now," said Enoch. "She died that night."

"What's on the docket to-day?" asked Eben.

"Oh, I want to see the Squire to git that order to take Tim Atwood and Marthy to the poorhouse to-day. He ain't done nothin' to amount to anythin' for a good many years, and Marthy is so tuckered out she had to give up her job up to Deacon Sprowle's and go home a week ago. As there ain't nothin' comin' in and no prospect, they might as well go to the town farm fust as last."

"Purty tough," was Plum's comment.

"Wall, what could you expect?" said Enoch. "The old feller's eighty-three, goin' on eighty-four, and the wimmen folks say Marthy has a pin loose."

"No, she ain't," cried Plum. "She's had a lot o' trouble, and more'n that, the people in this town don't treat her right."

"Oh, I don't know," drawled Mr. Scales. "'Tain't very nice for a young gal to run off with a feller and come back without him an' say she's married, but when she's asked for the proof, can't show it, an', later on become a disgrace to her old father. She says her name's Marthy Dalton, but there ain't a man, woman, nor child in town that calls her anythin' but Miss Atwood."

"Here's one that don't," said Plum. "I never meet her that I don't call her Mrs. Dalton, and I think little Davy Dalton is the smartest little feller of his age in this town."

"Wall, you're the only one," said Enoch with a sneer.

At that moment, Lawyer Barnett entered, carrying in his hand a large bundle of legal documents, each separate package of which was neatly tied with red tape. Behind him came Deacon Solomon Dalton.

"Got that commitment paper for Atwood and his daughter?" asked Mr. Scales.

"You wait a minute, Scales," said Mr. Barnett. "I have a little matter to settle with the Deacon first," and he went into his private office, followed by that individual.

When they were seated, Mr. Barnett said: "You know what Scales is here for, Deacon. Shall he take them right over?"

"Yes, he might as well take them along. I can't keep them away."

Mr. Barnett drummed upon the table: "Perhaps it is none of my business, Deacon, but, being your legal adviser, perhaps it is. Martha says she is your son's wife. Now, what will the town say if you let her go to the poor-house?"

"What are you talkin' about?" asked the Deacon, sharply. "Martha was never married to my son, and her child is — well, I guess I won't say any more."

"By the way, Deacon, when your son died out in Montana, wasn't he a pretty rich man?"

"Yes, I believe he made what worldly people would call a great strike, but, Brother Barnett, all gold is dross, and I've done nothing to get possession of anything he left."

Mr. Barnett laughed cynically: "We want none of that between us, Deacon. Gold is good enough for me, if I can get it. Martha claims she was married to your son, but her paper to prove it is mislaid or lost. Now, you corresponded with your son up to the time of his death. You know about his affairs — you had his confidence."

The Deacon was non-committal: "He was young and flighty."

The lawyer persisted: "The question is, Deacon, was there a legal marriage between your son and Martha Atwood?"

"You're a lawyer. Lawyers twist and turn like keys. How do I know but I'll lose some of my property if I get mixed up in the scrape? I've nothing to say."

"Then I had better give Scales the paper," said Mr. Barnett.

The Deacon nodded.

"Anything else you want to see me about this morning, Deacon?"

"Well, yes. Abigail is comin' right down here. She wa'n't ready when I saw you comin' along, but Brother Pudley said he'd come along with her. We want to see you about the bill on that injunction case. I asked the Parson to come too."

Hardly had he uttered the words when the door of the private office was opened, and the Rev. Mr. Merrill entered.

"Speak of the—" the Deacon began, but he must have realized that the remark was inappropriate. "I was just speaking to Lawyer Barnett about his bill up to the court yesterday." Then turning to the lawyer, he asked: "What are you goin' to charge us?"

"Well," said Mr. Barnett, "that was a very complicated case—so many people in it. Besides, I had to go without my dinner and spend a whole day in the court room. I have been thinking it over, and I guess twenty-five dollars will be about right."

There was a look of blank astonishment on the Deacon's face, as he gasped: "Twenty-five dollars! Why, we haven't got as much as that on hand."

"Oh, I am not in a hurry for it," said Mr. Barnett. "I know the Society is good for it."

There came a knock at the door.

"I guess that's Abigail," said the Deacon.

His surmise was correct, for Miss March, accompanied by Mr. Pudley, quickly obeyed Mr. Barnett's call to "Come in."

"What do you think, Abigail," began the Deacon, "Lawyer Barnett is goin' to charge the Society twenty-five dollars for stoppin' that show!"

His sister-in-law's reply was not what he expected:

"Well, I think it's worth twice the money to get rid of a pack of sinners. We're well rid of 'em. Stub Dutcher told me that he saw the boarding-house keeper—I can never speak his outlandish name—drivin' them towards Willoughby this mornin' as though the Old Nick was after them."

"Glory to faith!" exclaimed Mr. Pudley.

The Deacon turned to Mr. Merrill: "What do you think, Parson?"

"It is hardly becoming in me, a professional man, to fix the price for another professional man's services. Mr. Barnett will wait until next quarter, and when the dues come in, we shall have plenty to pay him."

"Yes, I know," whimpered the Deacon, "but it seems such an awful lot of money to pay for nothing."

"Nothing!" cried Abigail. "I am ashamed of you, Solomon. Like as not, they haven't paid their board bill, and if they had stayed here much longer, they might have come on the town. It would have sarved 'em right if they had."

"That reminds me," said Mr. Barnett, jumping to his feet, "Mr. Scales is waiting outside for that commitment paper to take Atwood and his daughter to the poorhouse."

"They ought to have gone there long ago," said Miss March. "Marthy is as crazy as a loon, and 'fore long they will have to send her to the 'sylum."

Mr. Wilkes poked his head in at the door: "Miss Winton would like to see you, Squire."

"Come, Deacon," cried Abigail, "let's git out."

"Is she alone?" asked Mr. Barnett.

"No," said Eben, "she's with Grandsir' Atwood, and Marthy, and little Davy."

"You had better stay, Deacon, and you, too, Miss March," said Mr. Barnett, "and see what comes of this."

Eben closed the door.

"So that's what Timothy Atwood has come to at last," said Miss March. "They say he paid fifty dollars for his wife's tombstone."

"Glory to faith!" exclaimed Mr. Pudley. "What sinful extravagance!"

Miss March went on: "And when Widder Foss lost her cow, he gave her another. I don't wonder he's come to the poorhouse. If he had remembered the old saying, Charity begins at home, he might have died under his own roof."

"That is where he is going to die," said a sweet voice, and, turning quickly, Miss March saw Miss Winton standing in the doorway, where, in fact, she had been for some time, unobserved.

Winnie approached the Squire, assisting Grandsire Atwood, who was followed by Martha, to whose dress little Davy was clinging.

"I should like to ask you, Squire," said Grandsire Atwood, and his voice trembled, "is it you that's sendin' us to the poorhouse?"

"No," said the Squire, "the order comes from the selectmen. Deacon Dalton is the chairman."

"Perhaps they think I've been here too long," said the old man, his voice quavering. "I come to Snickersville when there wa'n't a buildin' twixt Milliken's store and the

school-house. Nigh forty years ago, when I was in my prime, I gave eighty dollars in gold towards buildin' the new meetin'-house. I've never asked any of ye fer alms of any kind, and allers paid my debts as long as I could work. Don't them things count?"

"The selectmen think that it is better for your own comfort that you should go," said Mr. Barnett.

"My comfort would be to die in my own home; same room where mother died — not in a poorhouse. No, no, not that! I've prayed agin it over and over. Must be, I wasn't heard. There's Solomon and Abigail—I've knowed 'em all their lives — old friends. They'll b'ar witness I'm tellin' ye true. Can't you get a writ to let us stay, Squire? Marthy, and Davy, and I'd be fur happier in our own home. I know it's kinder run down, but I can work yet. I could shingle the house, if I could get some shingles. No one seems to want to help us, and I won't ask 'em, but mebbe I could get some shingles."

The little boy came to the old man's side and, with his little chubby hands, grasped the trembling fingers, looked up into his grandfather's eyes, which were wet with tears, and said: "Don't cry, grandpa; don't cry."

Mr. Scales opened the door and called out: "I can't wait any longer, Squire. I've got other business to attend to and my time is money as well as yours."

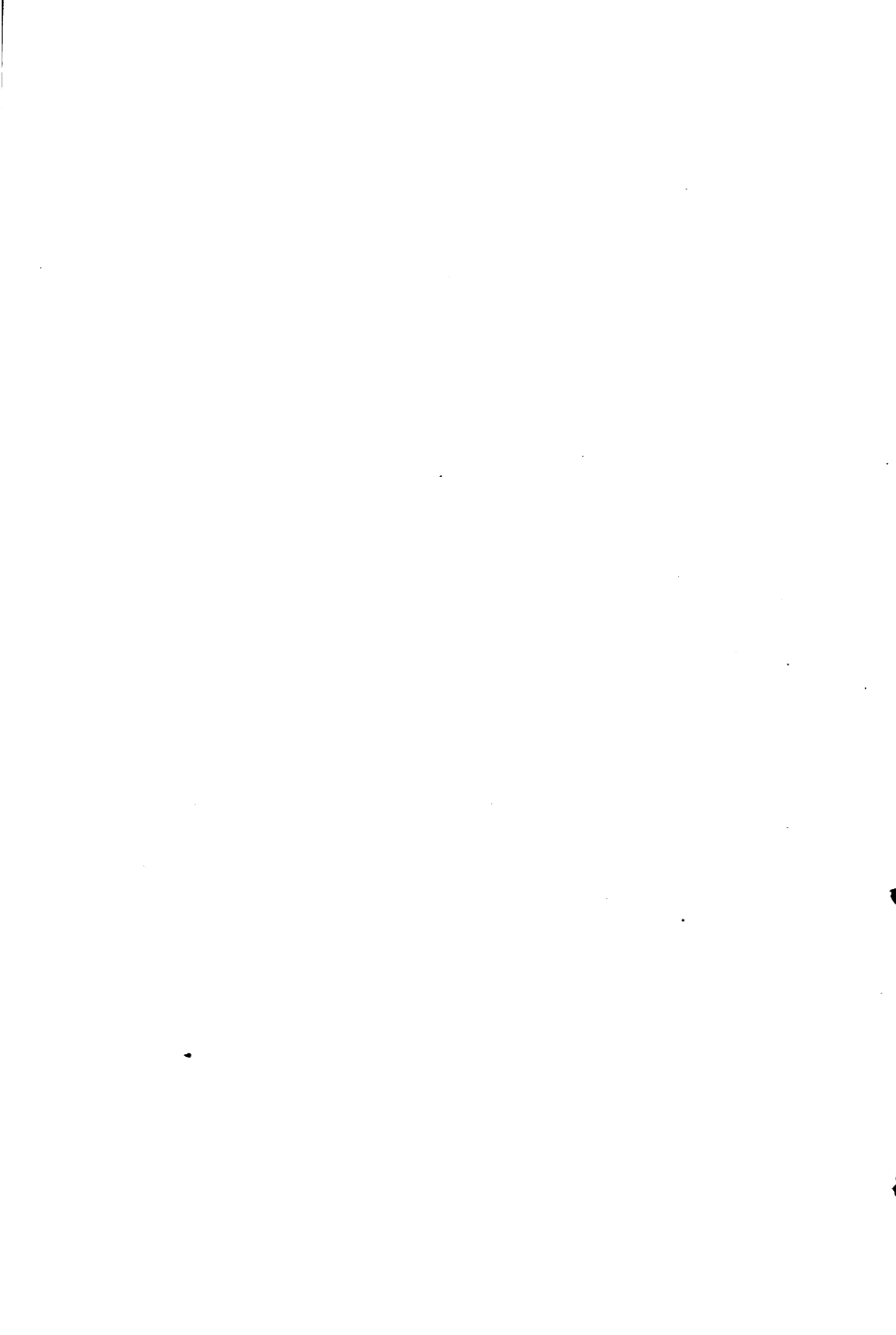
"All right, Enoch. Here's the paper," said Mr. Barnett, and he held it out.

"Please wait a moment, sir," said Winnie. "I don't quite understand this matter. Will you kindly explain? You know, I am a stranger in the town, but as I propose to remain here all summer, I feel interested in this case."

Miss March turned to her brother-in-law with an expression upon her face which caused Mr. Pudley to exclaim, involuntarily: "Glory to faith!"



"OVER THE HILL TO THE POORHOUSE"



The Squire preserved his equanimity : " Certainly, Miss Winton. Mr. Timothy Atwood's taxes have not been paid for the last three years. He is too old to work, and his daughter is not able to support him. A very simple case, miss. There is nothing cruel about it. He will be better off."

" He doesn't seem to think so," remarked Winnie. " What is the amount of the claim ? "

Mr. Barnett drew a document from the bundle and opened it: " Taxes and costs amount to twenty-nine dollars and sixty-seven cents."

Winnie opened her little porte-monnaie : " Please give him a receipt in full," she said as she laid a hundred dollar bill upon the table before the astonished assemblage.

Lawyer Barnett took a big leathern wallet from an inside coat pocket, and counted out the change.

" Is that all, Mr. Barnett ? " asked Winnie.

" That is all, so far as I am concerned," said the lawyer.

Miss March had been nudging her brother-in-law and whispering in his ear. The Deacon plucked up courage to say something :

" Will this woman give a bond that they won't become a town charge in the futur ? "

Winnie looked at him, her eyes flashing : " This woman will give any kind of a bond that the law demands. Does the law require anything of the kind, Mr. Barnett ? "

" I shall have to look it up," said the lawyer, cautiously.

Winnie turned to the old man and laid her hand upon his arm : " Come, sir, we will go home now."

" Home ? " he repeated. " Home ? " His voice broke and he buried his face in his hands.

" Yes, home," said Winnie. " I have a carriage at the door to take you, your daughter, and little Davy home, and I will go with you. Then we will see what can be

done to fix up the old home to make it comfortable for you. Good morning, gentlemen."

"Glory to faith!" exclaimed Mr. Pudley, as the door closed upon them.

The Deacon became brave and blurted out: "What does she mean turning those paupers loose on us?"

Miss March clasped her hands in a supplicating manner: "She's a lost creetur."

The Deacon still had remembrances of the show: "Her proper spere is cavortin' on the rostrum."

Abigail turned to Mr. Merrill: "What have you got to say about it, Elder?"

"It was noble of her — a grand action."

"Brother Solomon, it's plain to see that she's bedevilled him," exclaimed Miss March.

The Deacon assented: "The congregation must know of this enticement. It is all wrong, wrong!"

The carriage containing Winnie and her companions could be seen from the window. Miss March pointed: "See 'em there ridin' in a carriage. Well, I'd rot in the poorhouse afore I'd be saved by the wages of sin."

"By their fruits ye shall know them," said Mr. Merrill, solemnly. "Judge not, Sister Abigail, that ye be not judged."

Miss March fired up: "Don't you quote Scriptor at me, Elder Merrill. Quote it at her. She needs it."

"We all need it," said the clergyman, reverently. "Remember the Master's words: Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

CHAPTER XXVI

MRS. HARRISON GOSS

WHEN Winnie and her companions reached the Atwood farmhouse, the grateful old gentleman, and his no less thankful daughter, insisted that she should stay to dinner with them.

"You'll have to wait some time, miss," she said, "but I'll hurry as fast as I can."

"Please take your own time," said Winnie. "I have some business to attend to at the village, but I shall be back in an hour. Will dinner be ready by that time?"

"Oh, yes," said Martha. "I'll have everything nice and hot when you get here." Her face was flushed, and her eyes sparkled from the excitement of the occasion.

As Winnie was driven towards the village, she thought how cruel were Martha's persecutors. There was no sign of insanity in that sweet face. The sadness of expression that comes from brooding over real or fancied troubles was certainly there. When she went into the company of others, the thought of the stigma that was attached to her name was uppermost in her mind, and this made her appear *distract*, for while thinking of her great trouble, she paid little attention to the remarks or questions of those about her.

When Winnie returned, the seat beside her was piled high with purchases which she had made at Captain Milliken's store. There were tea, coffee, flour and sugar; and what brought from Martha expressions of delight, some candy for little Davy, and some pretty material for making him a new dress.

Never did a Lady Bountiful sit down to a happier meal

than did Winnie on this occasion. She had been pleased with the applause and other indications of appreciation which had come to her from over the footlights during her theatrical career, but she was sure that she had never felt happier than when she looked at the pleased faces of Grandsire Atwood, Martha, and little Davy.

The next day would be Sunday. "Are you going to church to-morrow, Martha?" asked Winnie.

The girl's lip quivered, and her eyes filled with tears. "I'm afraid to," she murmured, at last.

"You'll not be afraid if I go with you," said Winnie.

"And will you?" cried Martha. She wiped away her tears, and the bright look returned to her eyes.

"Yes, I'm going and you'll all go with me. I've sent the carriage back to the stable and they will not come for me until five o'clock. We actresses quite often have to be our own dressmakers, and I'm going to cut out little Davy's new dress. You and I will make it this afternoon."

The next morning, to the astonishment of the Rev. Franklin Merrill's congregation, Grandsire Atwood and his daughter Martha entered the church, closely followed by Winnie and little Davy. All necks were turned and all eyes were fixed upon the newcomers, but they bore the scrutiny bravely.

The Rev. Franklin Merrill saw them enter, and although he had decided as to which sermon he would deliver, he changed his mind quickly, choosing a text which he thought was more befitting, under the circumstances.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Mercy," he continued, "is one of the greatest of christian virtues. The great poet has said :

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: It is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes :

"My friends, what is mercy? It can be granted only by the strong; by those who are rich in money, or great in power. If you are wealthy, and a person owes you money, and you push him to extremes, you are not merciful."

Miss March whispered in her brother-in-law's ear: "He meant that for you, Solomon."

"If you make profession that you are a christian, and then drive your poor brother to the wall, you are a hypocrite"—and the speaker's voice rang out clear and strong.

Miss March nudged the Deacon, and said in an undertone: "That's a dig at us."

The speaker continued in this vein throughout his discourse, which was extemporaneous.

Miss March sat unmoved, without any further ebullition of temper, until the speaker said:

"The loss of money, or power, actual or prospective, makes a man unmerciful."

At this, she whispered to the Deacon: "He's hittin' us again."

It was a custom with the members of Mr. Merrill's church to invite the Pastor to dinner on Sunday. After Mr. Merrill had partaken of a bountiful repast at Deacon Sprowle's, the farmer and his guest went into the parlor, where their conversation became a combination of the spiritual and the temporal.

"You see, Parson," said the Deacon, speaking of the church, "we was originally Orthodox, but this 'ere town is too poor to support more'n one church, and so we took in all the unbelievers, 'til we have now sheep, and lambs, and calves, and a few goats. We hear what the minister says, and we give him due credit for it, but each on us sticks to his own personal opinion."

The Rev. Mr. Merrill was too politic a young man to

antagonize his parishioner, so he remained silent. But Deacon Sprowle had not finished his remarks.

"I forgit jes' when it was, Parson, but you preached a sermon agin greed of gold, as you called it. What you said was accordin' to Scriptor, but you warn't brought up in the country; if you had been, you'd have known that when it comes to hoss tradin', human nature comes to the top, and them moral sentiments, sech as you expressed, has to take a back seat. I know 'tain't jes' right, but, you see, we don't like to have the other feller get the best on us."

The next morning when Eben Wilkes reached Mr. Barnett's office, he found Stub Dutcher sitting on the step waiting for him.

"I say, Eb, do you know what's up?"

"Well, if I don't," said Eben, "I soon shall. Yer jest dyin' to tell me."

"Well, yer see," said Stub, "I was down to Riccadonna's this morning, early, and there's the most magnificent big woman that yer ever saw in yer life, and she's got glass beads all over her, an' they shine like stars. Martin says they're diamunts. He told me they was worth a million dollars apiece. If I had one, I'd buy this town and burn it up."

"Well, what's that got to do with me?" asked Eben. He was used to Stub's grandiloquent language, which always preceded a plain statement of fact.

"Well, yer see, I was talkin' to Martin down to the stable, and he told me that this woman was comin' to see yer boss, an' I thought I'd let you know so you'd treat her all right."

Eben knew what was meant by the word "treat," which Stub had emphasized, and he gave him a cigarette, just as Mr. Barnett came in sight.

Stub disappeared around the corner, and went across lots until he reached the road. He had played a trick on the lawyer a short time before and had been promised a thrashing if caught near the office again.

Mr. Barnett was busily engaged in preparing some papers for the next court day, when Dr. Danby entered the private office, slamming the door viciously behind him. His face was almost purple, and he seemed unable to speak.

"What's the matter, Doctor?" asked the lawyer.

"I was never so insulted in my life," exclaimed the irate physician.

"Who did it?"

"That actress," and the Doctor's voice rose to a high pitch. "I went to Atwood's house to examine Martha, so that I could make my report to Judge Rodgers, next Thursday, and that woman told me that every person in that house was level-headed, which was more than she could say for those outside. When I pounded on the door and demanded admittance, she told me to go away and mind my own business, or she'd bring a suit against me for trespass."

"She was right," said the lawyer, coolly. "Judge Rodgers said he would decide the matter next Thursday. You'd better keep away from there, Doctor."

The Doctor arose and surveyed his adviser: "Barnett, you're not the first man that's been made a fool of by a pretty woman," and he banged the door after him.

The lawyer had hardly recovered from his surprise at the Doctor's remark, when Eben entered, and announced that a lady wished to see him on business.

Stub Dutcher's description of the magnificent woman was correct in substance. She was imposing in appearance, richly dressed, and the "diamunts" referred to by

Stub, gleamed and sparkled. Lawyer Barnett sprang to his feet and offered his client a chair, into which she sank, gracefully.

"My name," she began, "is Mrs. Harrison Goss. It is, doubtless, unknown to you, but I choose to use it for the present. My business with you is purely personal — of the most delicate nature," and she glanced towards the door. "Are we free from observation and listeners?"

The lawyer nodded, but moved his chair nearer to hers.

"I have told you that my name is Mrs. Harrison Goss. Goss was my first husband's name. I have come here to learn whether I am or I am not Mrs. David Dalton."

Mr. Barnett could not repress signs of astonishment at this statement.

"You are surprised," said the lady. "You will be more so when I have told you my story. David Dalton is, or rather was, my husband. He committed a murder. I was the sole witness, and I married him to save him from the hand of the law. He told me that he had been married before, but that his father had written him that his wife was dead."

Mr. Barnett started to speak.

"Please hear me through," said the lady. "He distrusted his father, and we parted on the day of our marriage — he to come East and prove the truth or falsity of his father's letter."

Again Mr. Barnett was on the point of speaking, but the lady raised a warning finger, upon which was a large diamond ring.

"My husband, if he was my husband, lost his life in a railway accident. I have spared neither time nor money in my search for him, but I found no trace. He was a very wealthy man. The Dalton Copper Mines are among the richest in Montana. From letters and papers left behind

by my husband, I learned that he came from this town. You can now imagine the object of my visit here. Now, I will be the listener."

It was some minutes before Mr. Barnett took advantage of this permission and promise.

"I am getting my ideas into shape," he explained.

The lady smiled, reassuringly.

"It's a mixed up case," he began. "To speak plainly, the father lied when he wrote to his son that the girl was dead. She's alive, and has a little boy four years old."

The color fled from the woman's face, and she clasped her hands together so tightly that the diamonds cut into the flesh. She unclasped them, and wiped away the little drops of blood with a dainty lace handkerchief. "I feared the worst," she said, but the words were almost inaudible.

"Don't be in a hurry, ma'am," said Mr. Barnett. "There's a peculiar circumstance connected with the case. The girl claims that she was married to David Dalton — she eloped with him because his father was opposed to the marriage — and she says she gave her marriage certificate to her father, who is a very old man. It can't be found. She says it's lost or mislaid, but there are very few people in this town who believe her story, and fewer still who call her Mrs. Dalton."

"That's better," the woman exclaimed. "But where is the certificate? If she can prove her marriage, she is the heiress to millions. If she cannot, they are mine—mine!"

Mr. Barnett arose, as was his custom when perplexed, clasped his hands behind him, and walked the length of the room several times. As he was going by the window, he caught sight of a well-known figure.

"There she is!" he cried.

"Who?" The woman started to her feet, and was quickly at his side.

"Martha Atwood ; she who claims to be David Dalton's wife. Would you like to speak with her?"

"Yes."

"I will send my young man after her," said Mr. Barnett, and he went into the general office to find Eben.

The woman had resumed her seat. There she sat — one who was, in reality, no wife, yet one in the sight of the law, awaiting the coming of one who was truly a wife, but, who, in the sight of the law, was an outcast.

CHAPTER XXVII

A MIND ASTRAY

WHEN Mr. Barnett returned he did not speak to Mrs. Goss, but went directly to the window. He saw Eben running swiftly in the direction which Martha had taken and knew that he must soon overtake her.

He kept his place at the window until he saw them coming back. As he resumed his seat, he said: "They are nearly here."

The lady's thoughts had been busy during the interim. The lawyer had told her that the marriage certificate could not be found. If it really existed, until it was discovered her tenure was uncertain. If it were found, into whose hands would it fall? She had had dealings with lawyers and drew an inference that, if it came into Mr. Barnett's hands, she would have to pay a high price for it. She felt as a criminal might, sitting in the dark and awaiting the verdict. Was she wife or no wife? Was she a rich woman, or should she be stripped of all her property by the rightful heir? She set her teeth firmly together and clenched her hands. No, she would fight them!

The door opened and Martha entered. She looked pale and haggard. Months of trouble had almost broken her spirit and greatly injured her health.

Her hair was brown and her eyes blue, that combination so indicative of a sweet and sunny disposition; but it would take happiness to bring back the hue of health to those pale cheeks, and brightness to those listless, wandering eyes.

"Mrs. Goss, this is Miss Martha Atwood," said Mr. Barnett.

There was a dull light in the girl's eyes and just a semblance of the old spirit as she lifted her head, and, looking directly at him, said :

"Mr. Barnett, you know that is not my name. I am Mrs. Martha Dalton, wife of David Dalton."

The lawyer was somewhat taken aback, but recovered himself, and said, soothingly :

"Sit down, Martha, and let us talk it over. Mrs. Goss, shall I ask the questions, or will you?"

"I think it would be better that you should make minutes of the conversation," said Mrs. Goss, as she turned to Martha.

"You say you are the wife of David Dalton. Do you mean the son of Mr. Solomon Dalton of this town?"

The girl, who sat with her hands clasped in her lap, trying to overcome the nervous shudders which ran through her frame, simply nodded.

"Assuming your statements to be correct," said the lady, "when did you part from the man whom you claim to be your husband?"

"Nearly five years ago," was the response. "His father hated my father and me; I do not know why; and David and I ran away to get married."

"Then you were married?" The lady bit her lip with vexation as soon as she had asked this question. It was so foolish to thus betray her real feelings.

Again the girl's eyes flashed as she replied: "I said we were married, and I told you the truth."

Mrs. Goss was cool and collected again. "Where?" she asked.

Martha arose. "You have no right to ask me such questions."

"Sit down, Martha," said Mr. Barnett. "If you wish to hear from David Dalton you must answer the lady's questions."

Martha's eyes brightened, and a touch of color came to her cheeks, but the dull pallor overspread them again as Mrs. Goss repeated her question :

"Where?"

"I do not know," said Martha. "It was one night after supper that we drove away. All I can remember is that we crossed a river, over a bridge."

"Very definite," said Mrs. Goss, nearly forgetting herself again. "What was the clergyman's name?"

The girl's head sank again upon her breast: "Do not ask me any more questions. I do not know."

"Why did Mr. Dalton leave you?" asked Mrs. Goss.

"He said he was going away to make his fortune, and then he would come back to me. His father would do nothing for him. He had to go."

"He never came back." Mrs. Goss's voice was harsh. "You have never seen him since?"

Martha had resumed her seat when Mr. Barnett bade her do so; now she stood up again.

"Oh, yes, I have," she cried. "He comes to see me very often — at night — and he tells me that he will soon come home again to stay with me — and before he goes he always kisses our child."

Mrs. Goss looked at Mr. Barnett. "How ridiculous," she said, in an undertone.

The lawyer nodded. "Her mind is astray. She is often so."

Mrs. Goss turned again to Martha, who remained standing.

"Did I understand you to say that you had a child?"

"Oh, yes," cried Martha. "A little boy, four years old. I named him Davy for his father," and there came into her face that love-light which only the joy of motherhood could place there.

Mrs. Goss had learned the confirmation of what the lawyer had told her from the girl's lips. She now changed her tactics :

"Do you know, Martha—" She could not bring herself to the point of adding anything to that christian name, which is the synonym of sorrow—"Do you know, Martha, that the man whom you claim was your husband has done me a great injustice—and an irreparable wrong?"

The girl stood mute.

Mrs. Goss went on: "Perhaps he was a good man before he disobeyed his father and married you, but after that he went to the bad."

Martha clasped her hands nervously but did not speak.

"He became a very bad man, but I loved him. He never spoke of you, so I have not intentionally wronged you by marrying him."

Martha took a step forward. "You could not marry him. I am living. He cannot have two wives."

"I married him to save his life. Another man loved me and David Dalton killed him. I was the only witness of the crime and I swore that he killed the man in self-defence."

"He did," cried Martha. "I know he did. My David was a good man and would not injure any one; but he is free and will come back to me. He cannot be your husband. It would not be right, for he is mine, and he is Davy's father."

Mrs. Goss had not yet played her trump card.

"My dear young woman," she began, in a patronizing way which was, however, lost upon Martha, "I think I can prove to you that Mr. David Dalton was really a very bad man. He did not tell me about you until after we were married. Knowing that his neck was safe from the hangman's noose, he became ungrateful. He said that his

father had written to him that you were dead, but that he did not believe it. Then I told him that I could be to him a wife in name only, until he brought me proofs that you were dead."

The young girl had not missed the thread of the argument. "That was right," she said.

"He left me two months ago to come East. You have not seen him?"

"Not yet," said Martha. "But he will come. Something may have happened to him."

Mrs. Goss could restrain herself no longer. She arose and faced the trembling girl.

"He will never come," she cried. "He was killed in a railway accident the third day after he left me."

"Oh, God!" cried Martha. "My David is dead — and little Davy has no father. Would I could die too. But no, I must live and work, for my father needs me."

Mrs. Goss was surprised at the young girl's fortitude. She had supposed that Martha would be overcome by the intelligence and fall in a swoon at her feet. The girl's words enabled Mrs. Goss to grasp the situation, and make her next move.

"You are poor?" she asked.

"Very poor," said the girl, "and father is too old to work. Had it not been for a kind friend, whom God sent to us in our distress, we should now be in the poorhouse."

"Would you like to be rich?"

Martha looked at her questioner. "I would like enough money to make us comfortable, if I could get it honestly."

"You can," said Mrs. Goss. "You say that David Dalton was your husband, but you cannot prove it. After I leave this town, it makes little difference to me whether the people call you Martha Dalton or Martha Atwood; but there are reasons which you ought to be able fully to

appreciate why I wish to preserve my good name in the community in which I live. It is thousands of miles away and you will never hear from me again, but when I go back I must take with me conclusive proof that I am what I claim to be."

"I do not understand you," said Martha.

"I will make my meaning plain. You can be Mrs. Dalton here, but I must be Mrs. Dalton where I live. If you will sign a paper which Mr. Barnett will draw up, swearing that you were never legally married to David Dalton, I will pay you twenty thousand dollars. I have the money with me. No one in this town need ever know it."

The girl hesitated.

"Draw up the paper, Mr. Barnett," cried Mrs. Goss, and there was a triumphant ring in her voice.

"No!"

They turned towards Martha, who had spoken the word. Her cheeks were flaming red, and her eyes shone brilliantly.

"You say no one will know it," she cried. "God knows it—I know it—my dead husband knows it. My little Davy's birthright is worth more than all your money."

Without another word, Martha turned and fled from the room.

Mrs. Goss turned to Mr. Barnett. "What heroics." She sat down. Mr. Barnett had thought that she was a woman with an iron heart and nerves of steel. He was soon to learn the contrary. The revulsion came. Mrs. Goss laughed immoderately and then burst into tears. Mr. Barnett tried to calm her.

"Leave me alone," she cried, and pointed to the door.

Mr. Barnett spent the next twenty minutes in the front office, talking to disgusted clients who had about given up the hope of seeing him.

When he went back to the private office, Mrs. Goss was her former self. She had even put on her gloves, which attested that she had regained her equanimity.

"The young woman is obdurate. She may change her mind, and come to see you. The offer which I made her remains open until the marriage certificate is found—if it ever is."

"What would the certificate itself be worth to you?" asked Mr. Barnett.

The woman looked at him, suspiciously. "I will not tell you," she said, "until you assure me, on your word as a man of honor, that you do not know where it is at the present time."

Mr. Barnett saw the mistake he had made.

"Madam," he said, "if I had known where it was before you came, I should have given it to Martha. Knowing what I do now, if I find it—"

"You will make the best bargain you can with me."

Mr. Barnett inclined his head.

"Provided that this young woman does not know of its existence, the day that it is placed in my hands, I will pay you, or any one else, fifty thousand dollars."

"I should think it was worth more," said Mr. Barnett, slowly.

"It is I who fix the price, not you," said Mrs. Goss. "If that sum is not satisfactory, I shall keep the money and fight the case in court. You must remember that I am in possession, and as you lawyers say, that is nine points of the law. If you prefer it, you are welcome to the other point."

The lady arose and went towards the door.

"How long do you remain in town?" asked Mr. Barnett.

"I shall be driven at once to Willoughby, and take the

next train for home. Good day, Mr. Barnett. For the desired equivalent, I shall take pleasure in paying to you the sum I mentioned."

She opened the door, passed so quickly through the outer office that the loungers got but a glimpse of her face, and a moment later the sound of retreating carriage wheels indicated that the grand lady who was covered with "diamunts," as Stub Dutcher had informed everybody, had left Snickersville — probably forever.

CHAPTER XXVIII

STUB DUTCHER

MONDAY afternoon, about four o'clock, Miss Winnifred Winton came down from her room in which she had been enjoying an after-dinner nap, and, seating herself in one of the old-fashioned rocking-chairs on the piazza of the Cafe Riccadonna, thought over her experiences of the past six weeks, full of excitements and disappointments. The quietude of everything about her steadied her nerves and soothed her mind. She had made the Atwood family comfortable for the present, at least, and she was now thinking of some plan to improve their condition. The house needed repairs. Mr. Stark, the carpenter, had examined it carefully, and, after a long deliberation, had come to the conclusion that materials and work, principally the latter, would cost at least fifty dollars, "p'rhaps more and p'rhaps less, but not much either way." Winnie felt that she could not spare this large sum out of her small capital, and the question was: How could it be raised? If the members of the company were there, how easy it would be to get up a concert for a worthy object and secure the required amount.

A young man, walking along on the other side of the road, turned abruptly, came across the dusty thoroughfare, and ascended the steps. As he reached the top one, he removed his hat, made a low bow, and said:

"Have I the honor of addressing Miss Winnifred Winton?"

Winnie smiled and nodded pleasantly in response to this very polite salutation.

"I am Mr. Hosea Fogg, assistant editor of the *White Mountain Sun*."

"Pleased to see you, Mr. Fogg. The members of the dramatic profession are always glad to meet reporters and editors, you know." Winnie waved her hand, and Mr. Fogg took the proffered seat.

"I am afraid, Miss Winton, that you will not be so pleased to see me after you learn the nature of my errand."

"Is it so bad as that?" asked Winnie, affecting great astonishment at his words.

"Allow me to explain," said Mr. Fogg. "Mr. J. Austin Donaldson, editor of the *Sun*, and myself were both present at the performance of your company last Wednesday evening. If the writing of the criticism had been allotted to me, I am sure the result would have been much different; but, as Mr. Donaldson is editor-in-chief and proprietor of the paper, of course, if he takes a front seat, I am obliged to take a back one."

Again Miss Winton nodded and smiled.

"Mr. Donaldson has written a short article about the performance which must appear in the paper next Wednesday. I have thought it was due to you that you should know what was to be printed in advance of publication."

"I appreciate your courtesy, Mr. Fogg," said Winnie.

"I will read it," he said.

"The performance by a strolling company, borne down by the heavy sounding title of Hix's Cosmopolitan Corinthian Burlesque Company, was given at the Town Hall last Wednesday evening before a small audience, which, judging from the literary and musical excellence of the performance, was greater than it deserved. It is understood that complimentary tickets were distributed in large numbers by Captain Milliken, but it is needless to say

that those which fell into the hands of the members of the Ebenezer Society were not used. The play, if it can be called such, was a mass, or rather, mess of twiddle-twaddle. It had neither beginning nor end, and, under the circumstances, it was impossible for the audience to see the point."

"That's not bad," interrupted Winnie.

Mr. Fogg went on: "The performers were just what the play required, and no better. How the ladies would look if their gorgeous (?) costumes were replaced by their every-day attire, and the paint removed from their faces, is an unknown question, for it could not be solved at the performance. Deacon Solomon Dalton, ever on hand to look out for the moral interests of the town, applied early on Thursday morning to Justice Rodgers for an injunction to prevent a further performance of the piece. After a careful hearing of the subject, the injunction was allowed. It is to be hoped that companies of a similar stamp will take warning by this wholesome action on the part of our best citizens and avoid this municipality in the future."

"That's another good one," said Winnie, "I mean municipality."

"You take it quite pleasantly," remarked Mr. Fogg, "but what do you think will be the effect of the publication of this article?"

"Oh," said Winnie, "I think Mr. Donaldson and yourself are perfectly safe. The ladies and gentlemen connected with the company have left town, and I am the only resident representative. As I have retired from the stage temporarily, the criticism will not affect me, but I should like half a dozen copies of the paper, as I wish to send them to managers in New York. I shall be looking for an engagement next season, and I wish to get as strong endorsements as possible."

"You are sarcastic, Miss Winton," said Mr. Fogg.

"Oh, no," replied Winnie. "Did you ever hear the story of how P. T. Barnum made his first success?"

"I have not."

"Well, as the story was told to me," said Winnie, "when he first opened his show in New York City, the newspapers looked upon the whole matter as a joke and refused to put in the complimentary notices with which the press agent had supplied himself. He represented the situation to Mr. Barnum. I don't care what they put in, said Mr. Barnum. Let them pitch into the show as much as they please. No matter what they say about it as long as they say something. The advance agent made the rounds again, and the papers did say something, but not of a very complimentary nature. Curiosity was aroused to the highest pitch by the condemnatory articles which appeared in the papers, and the result was that, at the first performance, the house was jammed, and Mr. Barnum's success was assured."

Mr. Fogg arose to depart: "As I said before, Miss Winton, if I had written the article, its tenor would have been much different. Will you pardon me, if I say that I wish I could serve you in some way?"

"I think you can," said Winnie. "I have an idea in my mind and I should like your advice. Pray be seated again, Mr. Fogg," and he accepted the invitation. "Do you ever have fairs or charity bazaars in Snickersville?"

"Oh, yes, we have had them, and some of them have been very successful."

"What is the best way to get one up?" asked Winnie.

"Well, in the first place, you need a good send-off in the paper, but the only way in which an affair of the kind can be made successful is by personal application. The town is not large, and it doesn't take very long to see

every one in person and explain what the entertainment is to be and what for."

"But I am unknown in Snickersville — no, I don't mean that. I shall not be able to call myself unknown after that article appears in your paper. What I mean is, I don't know the people nor the way about town. I shall have to hire a guide."

"Oh, that is easy. If you will allow me, I will suggest one."

"Oh, certainly," said Winnie, "I shall be greatly obliged if you will."

"Then engage Stub Dutcher. Perhaps you have seen him. He is the little humpback fellow. He knows everybody in town and every turn and twist in the roads. Besides, he knows how to handle a horse, and he will be satisfied with a small compensation."

"That is very kind of you, Mr. Fogg. Now, what can we say in the paper? It is to be a charity bazaar — for a worthy object. There will be ice cream and cake — and articles for sale. If I can get a piano or a cabinet organ, I will sing some songs for them, and we will have a guessing contest and a spellin'-bee, and oh, for the one who guesses what the worthy object is to be, I will give a prize of five dollars."

"That is a fine lay-out," said Mr. Fogg. "Mr. Donaldson is going away for a week or ten days as soon as the paper's off the press Wednesday morning. That will give me two chances to boom the thing. I will set up all the big type there is in the office. Everybody will read the article, for when they see the scare-heads, they will think that the time-table is changed, and that's something that everybody in town reads."

"How much will the Town Hall cost for an afternoon and evening?"

"Oh, not more than five dollars. I will hire it in my own name, if you prefer, as soon as you fix upon the day."

"It must be as soon as possible," said Winnie.

"Make it a week from next Thursday, then. The paper will be out Wednesday and that will give them a day to think it over. Our people here never do anything in a hurry, Miss Winton. Good afternoon."

"Except when they write dramatic criticisms," was Winnie's parting shot, as Mr. Fogg went down the steps.

Tuesday morning was a busy one for Winnie. The evening before she had gotten up the copy for the admission ticket, and had thought out some of the details of the entertainment. She must see Mr. Fogg about having the tickets printed and she must make arrangements with Stub Dutcher — what a funny name she thought — to act as her guide and interpreter.

She spoke to Mr. Riccadonna about Stub. He said the young man was out at the stable and he would send him to her at once.

"What a strange looking object," was Winnie's thought when he approached, but, after talking with him for a while, she forgot all about his peculiar appearance and thought only of the brightness of his mind and the acuteness of his perception.

"I know all about this place," said Stub. "I've driven a hoss all over it more'n ten thousand times and nothin' ever happened to me, nor will there to you, if I handle the ribbons."

"Oh," said Winnie, "I have perfect confidence in you, Mr. Dutcher."

"Now, please, ma'am, don't call me Mr. Dutcher. If you do, everybody in town will be laffin' at me. Just call me Stub for short."

"All right," said Winnie, "I will call you Stub."

"Do you want to go anywhere this mornin'?" he asked.

"Yes, I wish to go to the newspaper office. I wish some printing done. Will the editor be there?" she ventured to inquire.

"Hosey will, but the boss never gits there afore noon-time. He sits up late nights, they say, to write things that nobody reads, and he sleeps mornin's when he ought to be up attendin' to business. If I run that paper, I'd make a hummer of it. I don't b'lieve they sell more'n two hundred copies a week. Well, I'll go and git the hoss and come right back."

The tickets were ordered, and Mr. Fogg, who was the sole occupant of the printing-office, said that she should have them by six o'clock that night. They came as promised, and Stub received orders to have the team in waiting for her at eight o'clock the next morning.

"Where shall we go fust?" asked Stub.

"I don't know," said Winnie. "I will go wherever you take me."

"Have yer ever met Ebenezer Stark?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," said Winnie, "he is going to get some of the money that I am going to make out of this entertainment."

"Well, if that's so," said Stub, "he ought to pony up fust. He won't dare to, but his wife will. Her name's Patience, but she ain't got a bit of it. I use' ter work for 'em once, and she's got about the hottest temper of any woman in town."

"Winnie's face was smiling as she took her place in the carriage after a visit to Mrs. Stark.

"I sold her three tickets," she said. "Her husband must have told her that I was going to give him some work to do."

"Oh, yes," said Stub, with a knowing wink, "Ma'am

Stark knows which side her bread's buttered on. She bought a ticket for that boy o' hers. He's the one made me lose my job. He use' ter pester me and call me Humpy. I give him a lickin' one day, and I left Mr. Stark's employment about fifteen minutes afterwards."

They next approached an old-fashioned, rambling farmhouse, in front of which was a flower garden, neatly laid out, but the season was not far enough advanced for a display of floral beauties.

"Who lives there?" asked Winnie.

"Witherspoon — Jonathan Witherspoon. He's a widower, but he's got two stunnin' daughters — Ri and Tri."

"Those are two funny names," remarked Winnie.

"Oh, they are Maria and Tryphena cut short to save time. They will want to go, but, of course, being girls, they won't want to buy their own tickets. Tom Appleby use' ter go with 'em, but he don't now."

Stub's prognostication did not prove true, for the sisters each purchased a ticket, and Winnie felt that, figuratively speaking, her path was strewn with roses.

"'Tain't far to the next house," said Stub. "They won't keep you long there. Jason White never goes to anythin', nor his wife, nuther. Her name's Hannah, but she leaves the H off at both ends and wants everybody to call her Anna."

When Winnie met Mrs. 'Anna' White, her courage began to fall.

"Goin' to have another show, are yer? I thought the Ebenezers shut yer up — so Jase told me. I don't see why you theatre folks don't go about your business and leave honest people alone. You come here and git our money and take it away with yer, and that's the last we see of it."

"But," protested Winnie, "none of this money is coming

to me. It is to be used for a worthy object — a deserving charity."

"Well, we're taxed for that?" said Mrs. White. "We've got a poorhouse and a poor-farm, and Jase says the folks that live up there have an easier time than we do."

"Do you take the *White Mountain Sun*?" asked Winnie.

"No, we can't afford to take newspapers, but we borrow it sometimes. I can't find much of anything in it, though."

"Well, Mrs. White," said Winnie, "I hope you will borrow it for the next two weeks and, perhaps, after reading about the entertainment, you will decide to come, after all. I shall be pleased to see you, and, as I told you, the money will be used for a worthy object."

"Is your pocket-book any heavier?" asked Stub, as he took up the reins.

"No, but my heart is," was the reply. "I am afraid my luck has turned.

Who lives in that big white house on the hill?" Winnie asked, as they approached it.

"Deacon Solomon Dalton and his sister Abigail March. Shall we stop there?"

"No," said Winnie, "if they want tickets, they can buy them at the hall."

"Oh, I know Sol," said Stub. "He'll try to work in as a dead-head to see if the show's a proper one."

"There will be no free tickets to this entertainment," said Winnie, "except for the press."

"You will do well here," said Stub, as he drew up before the door of the best looking house that Winnie had seen in the place. "Doctor Danby himself is a crank, but, if his son Paul is at home, he'll be all right. He was

to the show the other night. He sot right front o' me and from what I heerd him say — well, I don't know as I had better tell you, 'cause it was you he was talkin' about."

At this house, Winnie had met her most pleasant experience. Mr. Paul Danby was at home and expressed great interest in "the worthy object." He bought ten tickets for which he paid a dollar, and voluntarily promised to use his personal endeavors to increase the attendance.

At the next stopping place, Stub said: "This is Deacon Sprowle's. He and Deacon Dalton don't hitch very well, and if you'll just let him know that you don't like Deacon Dalton, he'll like you right off. I'm just givin' you a tip."

"Thank you," said Winnie.

"Be you one of the wimmen folks," asked Deacon Sprowle, as he leaned on his pitchfork, "that gave that show up to the Town Hall the other night?"

"I belonged to the Company."

"Wall, I didn't see the show, for I don't go to sich places, but I heerd that Deacon Dalton made a great fuss about it and kept yer from givin' it the second night. Of course, you won't say anything about it, but the Doctor's son Paul comes 'round here pretty often, and I think he's shinin' up to my darter Betsy, and she told me that he bought tickets for last Thursday night and she expected to go, and she was kinder taken back when she heerd what the Deacon had done. Ye ain't goin' to give him any chance to trouble yer this time, are yer?"

"Oh, no," Winnie replied, "this is a strictly moral entertainment for a worthy object. I don't think that Deacon Dalton will be there," she added.

Mr. Sprowle fished in his pocket and finally brought forth a half dollar: "Wall, I'll take five tickets. I've

been to a good many o' these shows, and I've found out to my cost that it's cheap enough gettin' in, but it costs a good deal to git out."

"What a little bit of a house!" exclaimed Winnie, as they came in sight of the next one.

"Yes, it's pretty small, but it ain't so small as the man that lives in it."

"Who is he?"

"Old Caleb Leeds lives there. He's 'most a hundred. They say, but I don't know whether it's true or not, that he's bought his coffin, 'cause he could buy it cheaper himself than his folks could after he died. He said he didn't need it now, but when he did, the undertaker would be sure to put the price up. You won't sell any in there. He sticks to money tighter than bark does to a tree."

"Enoch Scales lives here," was Stub's next remark. "He won't be to home, but his sister Tildy will. She's bedrid, and hasn't been out of the house for six months. I'll tie the hoss and go in with yer, for she might be frightened if she saw a stranger. I'll tell her yer comin'."

A wave of sympathy went over Winnie when she saw the thin face and almost fleshless hands of poor Tildy Scales. She sat down by the bed: "How do you feel to-day, Miss Scales?"

"About the same as ever. I ain't no use to myself nor anybody else. Enoch has to do all the work, and I can't help him a bit. I can't see what the good Lord keeps such worthless critters as I am alive for."

"Of course, you can't go to the entertainment that we are going to give," said Winnie, "but I wish very much that you could. I will promise, however, to come and tell you all about it and, if I make as much money as I hope to, I will buy a present for you and bring it to you, so that you will have something to remember me by."

It was a long time since Tildy Scales had heard kind words and been promised a visit and a present. Tears filled her eyes. She grasped one of Winnie's hands in both of hers and said :

"Well, I'll try and pluck up courage. I can't help feelin' low-spirited, I've been tied up here so long, but I won't find fault any more. The Lord has sent you to me and perhaps He'll remember me again by and by and give me back my health."

"Of course you didn't sell anything there," said Stub. "I didn't expect you would, but I wanted yer to see Tildy, 'cause she's the best-hearted woman in this town. I worked for Enoch once. He's a tough nut, but his sister is just as good as they make 'em. I allers liked her and she treated me fust rate."

"What a pretty little cottage !" cried Winnie. "When the flowers are in bloom and the grass is green, this must be a lovely place."

"Aunt Hannah Mugford lives here, and she ain't ashamed of her name, either."

"Is she your aunt ?" asked Winnie.

Stub laughed, and Winnie noticed that the laugh was a musical one : "She's as much my aunt as she is anybody's. Everybody in town calls her Aunt Hannah. She's a funny old lady. Most of the wimmen round here are very proud of keepin' their houses clean. They just scrub, and polish, and prink up all the time, but Aunt Hannah is just the opposite, and she never sweeps, or dusts, or scrubs, or does anything. She says God sends the dirt and she ain't goin' to wear herself out cleaning it up."

"Well," I don't think I will go in there," said Winnie.

"Well, I wouldn't unless the girls have been 'round."

"What do you mean by the girls being 'round ?"

"Oh," said Stub, "five or six times a year, the girls in the town — they all like Aunt Hannah — they just come up here to the house and they clean the place up. It makes Aunt Hannah crazy, but they don't pay any attention to her, but go right ahead. Sally Winkle told me, one day, that she asked Aunt Hannah how often she took a bath." Stub laughed again.

"What did she say?" asked Winnie.

"She told Sally that she never took one 'cept when she itched."

"No, you needn't stop," said Winnie. "I don't believe Aunt Hannah would come to the show, anyway."

"I think we had better go 'round to the store now," said Stub, "and see Captain Milliken. You can leave a lot of tickets with him and, as everybody comes to the store, he'll sell more'n you can this way. By Saturday night, everybody in town will know what you're up to, and if you'll give me some, I'll take them up to the barber shop Saturday night — I work for Jake every Saturday night helpin' him — and I know I can sell some for yer."

Captain Milliken promised to do all he could to help the worthy object, and, as Winnie was being driven home to dinner, she hoped that she had planted seed in good ground and that the crop would be bountiful.

The next week was spent in making preparations for the great event. She patronized Captain Milliken to such a degree that his sympathies and interest were enlisted to a still greater extent. She made a trip to Willoughby to purchase certain articles not included in Captain Milliken's stock in trade. Stub told everybody that the show was to be just like the pound party — everybody was supposed to bring something which would be sold for the benefit of somebody, he didn't know who.

Mr. Fogg kept his word. In the issue of the *White*

Mountain Sun which appeared the day before the one set for the entertainment, all the big type in the printing office was brought into service. When the staid inhabitants of Snickersville took up their weekly newspaper, the following lines met their eyes :

FOR SWEET CHARITY'S SAKE
GRAND ENTERTAINMENT IN THE TOWN
HALL TO-MORROW NIGHT

"COME ONE, COME ALL,
BOTH GREAT AND SMALL."

Let each one bring a gift and lay it upon the altar of
Charity

For "The greatest of these is Charity."

MISS WINNIFRED WINTON,
the celebrated Prima Donna, from New York, will favor the
audience with some oldtime melodies

A SPELLIN'-BEE WITH PRIZES FOR THE WINNER—
ICE CREAM AND CAKE — NO EXTRA CHARGE
A GREAT GUESSING CONTEST !
GRAND PRIZE — FIVE DOLLARS !!

Tickets for sale at Capt. Ezra Milliken's Store, Riccadonna's
Boarding-House, and at the Town Hall on the
evening of the entertainment
Admission to all, ten cents ; but bring with you, all the
money you can spare, as the entertainment is for
a worthy object. Who, or what is to get the
money, will be announced before the close
of the entertainment.

The scare-heads filled half a column of the paper, and Mr. Fogg took a column and a half more in which to dilate upon the manifold attractions of the entertainment.

"That Mr. Fogg will get a position on some New York paper," soliloquized Winnie, as she laid the sheet down after reading the article through at least three times. "When I get back to New York, if I ever do, I will do what I can to help him."

CHAPTER XXIX

"FOR SWEET CHARITY"

SNICKERSVILLE was set all agog by the flaming announcement in the *White Mountain Sun*. Its coruscations extended to Willoughby and adjoining towns. On every side was heard the question: "Who do you think will get the money?" A number of the Ebenezers "thought it probable that the Society would benefit by the entertainment, and lost no time in calling upon Miss March and propounding the query.

"If she gave it to us, we wouldn't take it," said Miss March, testily. "We can git along and do our noble work without dependin' upon the wages of sin."

Others thought that the money would go to make up for the minister's back salary, which was known to be somewhat in arrears. One cynical inhabitant shook his head knowingly, and said: "The whole thing is a joke. That theatre girl is goin' to keep the money herself so she can pay her fare home."

"I wouldn't blame her if she did," remarked his companion. "I don't think she was treated right and, if I was in her place, I would make all I could out of the town and then skip."

Others, when asked their opinion as to the probable disposition of the money, refused to say anything, and their questioner immediately concluded that they knew more than they were willing to tell and were probably going to try for the grand prize of five dollars.

Wednesday afternoon and all day Thursday Winnie was almost overwhelmed with offers of assistance and donations, ranging from a flatiron holder to a well-made and

not inartistic counterpane. She knew that the proffers of assistance and the donations sprang from varying motives, but she was not disposed to question them. She had but one object in view, and it was her ambition to secure it. When no questions were asked, she did not feel it incumbent upon her to proffer any explanations.

Miss Roxana Rhodes, the school-teacher, called after school was dismissed Wednesday night and asked Winnie if she were going to sing.

"I did intend to," said Winnie, "but I have learned that there is no piano or organ in the Town Hall. I am sure we had a piano the night of —" She was going to say, "our show," but changed the word to "entertainment."

"Oh, yes," interrupted Miss Rhodes, "we have the piano at the school-house, but whenever it is needed at the Town Hall, it is carried over. The selectmen decided that it was cheaper in the long run to do that than to buy two pianos. If you have no one engaged to play your accompaniments for you, I shall be pleased to help you."

"I can get through with them myself," said Winnie — "but how much would you charge?"

"Charge?" exclaimed Miss Rhodes, and there was a slight tone of vexation in her voice. "Do not misjudge me, Miss Winton. I learned from the newspaper that the proceeds were to be devoted to a charitable purpose, and I should, of course, give my services free of charge."

Winnie apologized for her inadvertent remark, explaining that in the great city from which she came it was often the custom at charitable entertainments to pay the performers, although, of course, it was announced in the papers and on the programmes that they had volunteered for the occasion.

In the evening, Winnie had a visit from Martin Van Buren Mudge, Esquire. He was a lean, lank, little man,

with a red face and a ponderous voice which entirely belied the human casket which contained it.

"Miss Winton," he began, "I was a most interested auditor at the very delightful musical and dramatic performance given by your excellent company at the Town Hall, which, I am sorry to say, is the only temple of Thespis which we possess."

Winnie had heard of Mr. Mudge's oratorical ability and was prepared for what she had heard and what was to come.

"I have had considerable experience at public gatherings," he went on. "My services are always in demand at election time, and I have had the honor of representing this town and the adjoining municipality of Willoughby in the New Hampshire legislature. I was too out-spoken for my brother legislators and, for that reason, only served one consecutive term — I mean, one term consecutively. I did, at one time, entertain the idea of making a contest for the senatorial nomination, for I had the impression that I should be much better satisfied with my associates in the upper branch than I was with those in the lower branch of our state legislature. But, unfortunately, when the time approached, I was taken with a severe cold which affected my vocal cords and, as I knew in making the campaign, I should be obliged to depend largely, if not wholly, upon my oratorical ability, I was obliged by physical necessity rather than mental indisposition to decline to become a candidate."

Winnie thought to herself: "Oh, if Edwin Forest could only have known him, his future would have been assured." Then aloud, she said:

"I am very grateful to you, sir, for your kindness in calling upon me, and regret very much that you were prevented from securing those high political honors, which, doubtless, you thoroughly deserve."

"Thank you, madam," said Mr. Mudge. "I have no doubt, if I had been elected, that I should have been a credit to my constituency, and some of my friends have even told me that if I had been elected — please bear in mind that little word *if* — there is no doubt but that I should have been able to step into the gubernatorial chair."

"I have no doubt of it," said Winnie, for she was beginning to thoroughly enjoy the situation.

"If I had been elevated to that august position," Mr. Mudge went on, "I should have inaugurated certain reforms in our laws which are greatly needed. I know that the genius of our government depends upon three co-ordinate, but separate branches — the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. But, bear this in mind, laws are passed by the legislative branch which are set aside by the judicial as unconstitutional. Why should not the executive, who is elected by the people as being responsible to them for the good government of the state, be allowed to suggest and even to demand that certain laws needed by the people should be passed by the legislators?"

Winnie felt unable to answer this ponderous question, but nodded, not knowing whether this action on her part suited the occasion.

"I don't suppose, Miss Winton, that you are particularly interested in political matters, which I have made the study of my life. I have come here to-night, to use the words which appeared in our local newspaper, and which were, no doubt, written by its talented editor, Mr. Donaldson — for sweet charity's sake.

"It is the usual custom, and one that I think is, to use a common expression, quite appropriate, that such an occasion should be opened by some introductory remarks, and I have come here to proffer my services without any

further hope of reward than the satisfaction of having contributed, in some slight degree, to the success of your undertaking. In the words of the good Book — and no finer one was ever written: The greatest of these is charity."

Early Thursday morning Stub Dutcher came to report that he had sold about seventy tickets: "Biz was good at the barber shop Saturday night and I got rid of over thirty, and I've been workin' up the boys — and Enoch took me over to Willoughby in his wagon and I sold ten over there, Oh, I tell yer, Miss Winton, yer goin' to have a big house. I guess you'd better let me have twenty-five more tickets, for I'm goin' to make it up to a hundred if I can."

After breakfast, Winnie went up to Captain Milliken's store to learn what success he had met with. He had had a good Saturday night, too, for he had sold about fifty tickets, and he thought he could handle about twenty-five more. While Winnie was talking to the Captain, young Mr. Danby came in. He asked her what success she was having and seemed greatly pleased with her favorable report.

"As I expect," he said, "to win that prize of five dollars, I think it is only fair that I should invest part of it in tickets, so I will take ten more." He bought some cigars, and, after lighting one, stepped out upon the portico.

"I s'pose you're goin' to have some bean guessin'," said Captain Milliken, "and I've picked out for yer nice big pickle bottle and filled it full of beans. Do you know, it took a whole stick of sealing wax to cover up that stopple."

Winnie ordered a few things to be sent to Mr. Atwood's and also bought a jar of apricot jelly, which Captain Mil-

likened declared was home-made and that "there wa'n't none better."

"Who's it fur?" he asked, after he had done it up. "I reckon you don't want it for yerself."

"No," said Winnie, "I wish you would have Stub Dutcher take it up to Miss Matilda Scales, and tell him I will pay him."

"Oh, no need o' that," said the Captain; "Enoch will be in here sometime this morning and I'll give it to him."

"Please don't," said Winnie; "I much prefer that Stub should take it to her and tell her it is from me."

"Oh, all right," said the Captain; "I only wanted to accommodate."

Winnie had an impression that Mr. Paul Danby, although she could not see him, was out upon the portico, and she was afraid that he would offer to accompany her home, especially when he saw that she had a package to carry. He was not on the portico, but she saw him down the road, talking to a man, who, upon approaching, she found was Mr. Bat Mulvey.

"The top o' the mornin' to ye, miss," said Mr. Mulvey, raising his weather-beaten hat. "It's glad I am that I see ye. My darter Rosa has jist got home—she's been away on her weddin' tower—and when she read in the paper about the time that you're goin' to hev, she wanted me to tell ye that she was goin' to bring some things and, if ye liked to hev her, would take charge of a table."

"By all means," said Winnie, "I should be delighted to have her do so."

"What have you in your bundle?" asked Mr. Danby. "Perhaps it is impolite to make such an inquiry, but I suppose it is some joke that you are going to play on us."

"Oh, not at all," said Winnie. "It is only a bottle full of beans that Captain Milliken gave me, and the one who

guesses nearest to the number of beans in the bottle will get a prize of one dollar."

While talking, the string had slipped from the bottle, and Mr. Danby courteously proffered his service to replace it. Kneeling upon the grass, he unrolled the package, then rolled it up again, and tied it securely. Winnie took it, and, with a "Thank you," started on her way homeward.

Rosa was the first one who had offered to assist her in taking charge of the tables, but the afternoon brought numerous offers which were all gladly accepted. The Misses Sally Winkle, Maria and Tryphena Witherspoon, Betsy Sprowle, and Mrs. Thankful Milliken were assigned tables, while Tom Appleby, Plummer Gifford, and Eben Wilkes offered to dish out ice cream and make themselves generally useful.

The momentous time — the opening of the bazaar — had at last arrived, and at half past seven, a crowd of people, many of whom had been waiting outside for nearly an hour, was admitted to the brightly lighted Town Hall, the illumination of which was produced by large kerosene lamps placed upon the wall and having reflectors behind them. In addition, each table was provided with half a dozen candles, in order to show the articles off to best advantage.

By quarter of eight, the hall was actually crowded, and Winnie, who was used to counting up audiences through peep-holes in theatre curtains, estimated that there were fully three hundred persons present. Trade was soon brisk at the different tables. Mr. Paul Danby was evidently well supplied with money, but he made nearly all his purchases at Winnie's table. She had charge of the guessing contest as to the number of beans in a bottle. Each guess cost five cents and, before the contest was

closed, Mr. Danby had invested half a dollar in what he seemed to consider a very delightful pastime.

At eight o'clock, Martin Van Buren Mudge, Esquire, ascended the platform and, in stentorian tones, called the meeting to order. During the first part of his remarks, he held the attention of his auditors, but when it became evident that he had no fixed time for closing, business at the tables was resumed, and, although his ponderous tones could be heard above the conversation and the laughter, his speech did not attract the attention which it undoubtedly deserved. His remarks may be condensed as follows :

“Ladies and gentlemen, I have been requested by the fair priestess of Charity who has inaugurated this entertainment, and which, by your kind attendance and bountiful contributions, will be made a monetary success, to make an address upon this occasion. All of you who are present have heard my voice before, and I know you will all bear me witness that it has never been raised except in the cause of honor, truth, and charity. As I told the fair priestess when I accepted her invitation to address you on this auspicious occasion, the greatest of these is charity.

“When I had the honor to represent you in that august body, the State Legislature, at Concord, I took the ground, and maintained it strenuously, that those who were not able to support themselves should be cared for by the state. We come into this world not of our own accord, but as the result of a chain of circumstances over which we have no personal control. We are told that it is cowardice to commit suicide, and, therefore, we are obliged to live in order to comply with the laws of man and the mandates of the Almighty. Now, as I said before, if a man cannot support himself — and by a man I mean woman as well — then it is the state's duty to provide the means for sustenance.”

As Mr. Mudge had remarked, all of those present had heard his voice before, and they were soon convinced that his oration was to be but a repetition of those they had heard on former occasions. It was at this point that the conversation and laughter were resumed, and the young ladies who had been waiting impatiently at their tables were again smiling and extolling the virtues of their wares to prospective purchasers. It was not until the ice cream and cake were served that Mr. Mudge brought his remarks to a close. Plum Gifford whispered to Tom Appleby :

"I knew that would stop him. Mudge would rather eat than speak."

By quarter of nine, the tables were pretty thoroughly denuded of the articles with which they had been loaded at the opening of the Charity Bazaar. Winnie was busily engaged receiving the proceeds from one of the young ladies whose table had been entirely cleared, when she heard her name pronounced. Looking up, she saw the Rev. Franklin Merrill. A moment later, when they were comparatively alone, he leaned over the table, and asked :

"Why was I not given an opportunity to participate in this festivity ?"

Winnie colored perceptibly, despite her inward resolve to appear unconcerned : "Why, really, Mr. Merrill, I did not think —"

"Please do not tell me, Miss Winton, what you did not think, but what you do think."

Winnie remained silent.

"Will you allow me to supply the words for you ?" he asked.

Winnie did not reply.

"I shall consider your silence as giving consent. You thought that because I was connected with the Ebenezer

Society and was obliged to appear as one of the prosecutors in the injunction case that I was your enemy, and, for that reason, you did not care for my assistance. Am I right?"

Winnie realized that the Rev. Franklin Merrill was a masterful man, and one who, in conversation, would be disposed to have the last word. A woman, however, usually considers that is her prerogative.

"I did not ask anyone to assist me, Mr. Merrill. All who are aiding me came voluntarily to me and proffered their services. If you had offered yours, they would have been accepted. As there were no free tickets, you must have paid for your admission, and I am grateful for that assistance."

Mr. Merrill would have liked to reply, but Miss Rhodes had taken her seat at the piano and was playing "Waves of Ocean," which was her *piece de resistance*.

"Excuse me, Mr. Merrill," said Winnie; "I have to sing," and she made her way quickly to the platform.

Winnie had brought a roll of music with her and, bending down, she asked Miss Rhodes: "What would probably please the audience best?"

"I don't think we can settle it that way," said Miss Rhodes. "You will probably have to sing what I can play best."

"Well, what can you play the best?" asked Winnie, feeling the necessity of the limitation.

"Home, Sweet Home is one of them," said Miss Rhodes.

"Then I will sing that," said Winnie.

No song has ever touched so many hearts. Both words and music are simple, but there is soul in the words and the sweetest of melodies in the music. When an operatic cavatina is received with but faint appreciation, often the

singers of grand opera rely upon the simple strains of "Home, Sweet Home," to arouse their audiences to the pitch of enthusiasm.

Winnie was not a great singer, but she had a sweet voice, and she had that understanding of the words of the song which sent them home to the hearts of her listeners. If left to her own free will, she would probably have given a dainty little *chanson* for an encore, but Miss Rhodes placed upon the music rack "Nearer My God to Thee." She felt that it would be best to keep within the boundaries fixed by her accompanist.

"What can I sing now, Miss Rhodes?" asked Winnie, after she had bowed half a dozen times in acknowledgment of the plaudits which she received.

"Old Folks at Home?" asked Miss Rhodes, as she held up the music.

"Oh, yes," said Winnie.

This concluded the musical portion of the programme, although there were loud demands for more songs.

As Winnie came down from the platform, she was met by Mr. Paul Danby: "Excuse me, Miss Winton, but can you sing, Oh, that we two were Maying? Miss Rhodes can play the music and I can sing my part."

"I cannot sing any more," said Winnie. "I should like to, of course, but we have so much to do, there is really no time." In her heart, she felt that nothing could induce her to appear upon the same platform with Paul Danby and sing a duet with him, especially one with such a suggestive title.

Mr. Mudge approached Winnie: "I suppose it is time now to make the announcement that the guesses will be opened for the grand prize."

Winnie thought for a moment: "Oh, no, Mr. Mudge; I have forgotten one thing that was announced in the

paper, but we really haven't time for it — the spelling-bee. Will you please tell the audience that we will have one later, and then you can go right on and open the guesses.”

Mr. Mudge again ascended the platform, and in his customary parliamentary style, began by saying :

“This meeting will please come to order. I have been requested by Miss Winton, to the dulcet tones of whose voice we have all been listening with unaffected pleasure, that, owing to the lateness of the hour, we shall be obliged to dispense with the literary part of the entertainment, which was announced in the newspaper as a spellin'-bee. The lady wishes me to inform you that she will be pleased to make arrangements for such a literary combat at some future time, and, allow me to say, that I trust upon that occasion, I shall be one of the participants. One, who is so used to the delivery of words as I am, could not have attained the proficiency with which my friends credit me, if I had not learned to spell these words correctly, for correct spelling precedes correct pronunciation, and, in fact, is an indispensable requisite.

“But there is one part of our programme which will not be omitted, for I know it is one to which you have all looked forward with eager hopes that one of you will be the recipient of the grand prize.”

At this juncture, Winnie held up the pickle bottle full of beans : “This one first, Mr. Mudge, please.”

“But how can that prize be awarded, Miss Winton, until the beans are counted ? ”

“They have been counted,” was the reply, “by Mr. Riccadonna and myself, and here is the correct count in this sealed envelope. Neither Mr. Riccadonna nor myself are competitors for the prize, of course.”

Mr. Mudge coughed, then he opened the envelope and

read the figures upon a slip of paper which he took from it. It took some time to examine the slips containing the guesses, but Mr. Mudge finally announced that the prize of one dollar had fallen to Mr. Paul Danby, who had guessed within five of the exact number of beans contained in the bottle.

"Why, what a wonderful brain that young Mr. Danby must have," said Miss Rhodes.

It was the opinion of many of the residents of Snickersville that Miss Rhodes had had a very high opinion of Mr. Paul Danby for quite a while. If she had known that he had found at home a pickle bottle of the same size which he had rolled up for Miss Winton, had filled the same with beans, and had counted them carefully, she might not have had such a high opinion of his ability as a guesser.

Winnie again approached the platform and held up another sealed envelope to Mr. Mudge.

"What does this contain?" he asked.

"The name of the worthy object," was her reply.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Mudge, omitting the usual words with which he attracted the attention of his auditors, "this envelope contains the name of the worthy object to which the proceeds of this entertainment are to be devoted. I shall open it and read it, but, for the present, shall keep the contents to myself. I shall then proceed to open the envelopes containing the guesses, which I am informed have been numbered from one to one hundred and fifty-three. It should be understood that, according to the terms of the competition, the prize falls to the first one making the correct guess."

As he tore open the first envelope and took out the slip which it contained, he exclaimed in a loud voice: "Number one — The Ebenezer Moral Reform Society."

Many faces showed signs of disappointment when Mr.

Mudge took up another envelope, which indicated that the Ebenezers were not to be the beneficiaries.

"Number two—To buy a new piano for the Town Hall."

A man laughed aloud at this announcement, and the others knew who made the guess.

"Number three—To pay the minister's back salary."

There was a loud chorus of "Ohs and ahs," and the Rev. Franklin Merrill, who had been standing near the platform in full view of the audience, slipped into a chair which stood conveniently near.

"Number four—To enable Miss Winton to pay her fare home."

Then followed a hubbub. Cries of, "That's mean," "Shameful," "Put him out," and like expressions were heard from all parts of the hall. Winnie bit her under lip and looked as unconcerned as possible, but she would have given five dollars to learn the name of the author of the insult.

"Number five—" Mr. Mudge read the slip through twice before he ventured to utter its contents aloud—"To shingle Timothy Atwood's house and make other necessary repairs." Mr. Mudge used his voice to its fullest capacity: "Number five wins the grand prize. Who holds the check for Number five?"

Mr. Paul Danby stepped forward and passed it to Mr. Mudge. Winnie, who had been holding the envelope containing the coveted five dollars, handed it to Mr. Mudge, who, in turn, passed it to the winner. Mr. Danby opened the envelope, took out the money, and advancing to Winnie, made a low bow, and then said in a voice loud enough to be heard by the eager listeners:

"Allow me, Miss Winton, to contribute this sum for sweet charity's sake."

Winnie took the money, but, as she did so, she wondered

whether Mr. Paul Danby was the author of Guess Number Three as well as Guess Number Five. The numbered checks had been given out by her assistants. She could not account for the impression, but she felt that Paul Danby was not sincere, and she hated insincerity.

Mr. Mudge did not forget the rules of parliamentary practice, but stopped the conversation with his usual vocal command, with its trace of politeness: "This meeting will please come to order." Then he went on:

"There now remains but one further announcement to be made and that I think, and I know you will all agree with me, should come from the lips of the one whom I designated at the opening of these festivities as the fair priestess of Charity. Miss Winton, it is with great pleasure that I yield the platform to you."

Mr. Mudge bowed, and this act was received with great applause by the audience. It will never be definitely known whether the approbation was accorded to him on account of the manner in which he had performed his duties during the evening or to the fact that he had completed them.

A moment later, Winnie mounted the platform, her face flushed with excitement and pleasure, and announced that, after paying all expenses, the sum of fifty-three dollars and seventy-five cents would be realized, and that it would be used to shingle Timothy Atwood's house and put it in good habitable condition throughout. "And I trust," she added, "you will all agree with me that the money is to be used for a worthy object."

As Winnie came down from the platform, she saw a familiar face. A young man was coming towards her with outstretched hand. She gave him hers and said:

"To you, Mr. Fogg, more than to anyone else, is due the great success of my first charity bazaar."

Although Mr. Riccadonna, of his own accord, had come

up to the hall to see Miss Winton home, he saw that she was provided with an escort, as did many others, and that Mr. Fogg was the favored individual.

CHAPTER XXX

THE NEW HOME

"STUB," said Winnie, as they were walking back to the boarding-house from Mr. Stark's, where she had been to make sure that there would be no delay in beginning work on Grandsire Atwood's house, "I must look about for a new boarding place."

It was the morning after the bazaar. Winnie and Stub had paid an early visit to the Town Hall, had seen that borrowed property, including the piano, was returned to its proper owners, and had settled all outstanding bills.

Then had followed the visit to Mr. Stark, who had promised to begin work as soon as he could get the shingles and lumber over from Willoughby.

"Don't you like Riccadonna's?" asked Stub.

"Oh, I like the place very well, and the food is much better than actors usually get, but it is expensive, and I haven't a great deal of money."

"I heard Judge Rodgers say, one day in Court, that folks who'd got brains didn't need much money, so I guess you'll get along."

They were crossing a piece of level greensward. Winnie made an old-fashioned courtesy. "Mr. Dutcher, I appreciate that compliment much more than I do many that have been paid me."

"Say, miss, don't call me Mr. Dutcher. If you do, everybody in town will laugh at me, and they pester me enough, anyway."

"Certainly, I won't. I wished to make a proper return for your compliment. But where can I find a place to board?"

Stub took off his hat, scratched his head, and then rolled his wide-brimmed felt hat into as small a compass as possible.

"When Tildy was spry, Enoch Scales used to take boarders, but you couldn't go there now. Jonathan Witherspoon would take you quick enough, on his own 'count, but them girls of his would be agin it. By George! Why in thunder didn't I think of it before?"

"Why, Stub," cried Winnie, "what language. What a pirate you are."

"Scuse me. I forgot myself entirely. Mandy Harkins will take yer."

"And who is Mandy Harkins?" asked Winnie. "Was she at the fair?"

"No, Plum asked her, but they had a little tiff that afternoon, and she's mighty high-spirited, and she wouldn't go."

"But who is Mandy Harkins?" persisted Winnie.

"Why, she's the woman I work for. I'll tell you all about her. She's what they call an orphin, like me. We haven't got any father or mother, or grandfather or grandmother. Her Uncle John used to live with her, but he died about two months ago, and then she offered me more than Deacon Sprowle was givin' me, so I came over. She's goin' to run the farm in great style this year. Bat Mulvey and Jeff Smith are goin' to work for her, but they ain't goin' to stay there nights. Mandy says she ain't afraid if I'm 'round."

"Has she got a big house?" asked Winnie.

"There's fifteen rooms and only two of us to use 'em. They've all got things in them, too."

An idea came into Winnie's head, but she felt that it would be useless to discuss the matter with Stub. "Can we go right over there now?"

"Come right along," said Stub. "My time's most up. She let me off a couple of hours 'cause I told her I wanted to help you. She can be mighty good-natured when she wants to."

Miss Amanda Harkins received her visitor very graciously and asked her into the sitting-room, which was very prettily furnished. There was a square piano in one corner of the room and the walls were covered with pictures. To be sure, they were not very artistic, as the word goes, but they were the best of all pictures — those with associations connected with them.

Winnie stated the object of her visit, somewhat timidly, it must be confessed.

"Well, I don't know, said Mandy; "I shall have three men folks on my hands 'bout a week from now, and I don't know as one more will make much difference. Are you fussy about your victuals?"

"For years I have had to put up with what I could get," was Winnie's reply.

"Well, you'll get enough, if you come here, and it will be good, if I do say it. Course I know you've come from the city, and I didn't know but what you'd want them jimcracks made out of nothin' that they have down there."

"Oh, no," said Winnie. "Good wholesome food is all that I'll require. I don't expect dainties."

"Well, you'll get them," said Mandy. "I've got more than fifty bottles of jelly down-stairs and some of the best pickles you ever tasted. Then I've got a cook book, and I make lots of puddin's and put jelly and fruit sauce on them, and it would do your heart good to see Stub Dutcher eat."

"I am sure that I shall be satisfied," said Winnie.

"You can have the front room right over this. It's jest as big. Father and mother used to have it, and then

Uncle Jack. He ain't been dead long, but you won't mind that, will you, miss?"

"Oh, no," said Winnie. "I am not afraid of ghosts."

"No danger of his comin' back," replied Mandy. "He was ailin' more'n a year before he died, and he said he was glad to go."

"And the price?" queried Winnie.

Mandy answered instantly: "Three dollars a week. I'd make it two and a half, but I've got to buy a new mowing machine, and every little helps."

Winnie felt that her lines had at last fallen in pleasant places, but the ordeal was still to come. She hardly knew how to begin, but she ventured:

"Perhaps you know that Mr. Timothy Atwood is going to have his house repaired."

"Oh, yes," said Mandy. "I know all about it. Stub told me the whole thing from one end to t'other."

Winnie felt that the ice was broken: "Mr. Stark says—he's going to do the work—that it won't be very pleasant for the old gentleman, and particularly for Martha, who is really in poor health, to stay there while they are working on the roof, and he says that the kitchen floor has settled and will have to be relaid—I really don't know what to do for them."

Mandy squared her shoulders: "Well, you've come to jest the right house. In the first place, I don't belong to the Ebenezer Society. I go to church, but I sit with the goats, 'cause I'm no sheep, an' it's jest makes my blood boil to hear Abigail March and some of them others talk about poor Martha. I believe she was married all right, an' they ought to take her word for it. After I'm married, if any one asks to see my certificate, I'll show 'em this," and she doubled up her hand and shook her plump little fist in the air. After this exhibition of her disposition, she resumed:

"I'm glad Marthy an' her poor old father an' her dear little boy have found a good friend in you, Miss Winton. She needed you awfully, an' the Lord must have sent you."

Winnie thought of Colonel Hix, but she did not question Mandy's conclusion.

"How long will it take to do the job?"

"Mr. Stark told me," said Winnie, "that with the other work he had promised, he was afraid it would be a month before he could do all that was needed."

"Have them come right up here," cried Mandy. "The old gentleman can putter 'round the house, so Stub can go out in the fields and help the other men."

Winnie noticed the word "other." She would have to tell Stub that.

Mandy went on: "Marthy can have the rest she so much needs. Little Davy can feed the chickens and play with my big dog, Buster, an' we'll feed him on milk an' eggs and have him as fat as butter in a month."

"And what will you charge for their board?" asked Winnie.

"Well, I know their circumstances, and I suppose you'll have to pay the bill out of what you made at the fair last night. Plum asked me to go, but he did it in such a way that I wouldn't. I suppose I cut my own nose off to spite my face, for I heard you had a fine time."

"We did much better than I expected," said Winnie.

"Don't you tell anybody, Miss Winton, but I suppose I shall marry that Plum Gifford some day, tantalizin' as he is. I've got some money put away in the bank at Willoughby, and if I can add ten dollars to it a month from to-day I'll be satisfied."

Winnie expressed her agreement to the terms: "When can we come?" she asked.

"Any time," said Mandy, as she went to the front door

with her. "My latch-string is always out to my friends. Folks I don't like, have to go 'round to the back door, and when I see 'em comin' I bolt it."

That evening Plum Gifford came to see Miss Harkins. She told him of Winnie's visit and that she and the Atwood family were coming to board with her. They were sitting on the piazza when Stub, who had been sent down to Captain Milliken's on an errand, came back, bringing a note from Miss Winton.

MY DEAR MISS HARKINS:

We shall all take shelter under your hospitable roof to-morrow morning. Martha is delighted at the prospect, and Grandsire Atwood shed tears he was so overjoyed. Little Davy would not go to sleep until his mother promised to wake him at daylight. I have arranged with Mr. Riccadonna to bring my trunks, and what personal effects the family will need during their short stay with you.

Yours sincerely,

WINNIFRED WINTON.

"Plum," said Mandy, "after the folks have gone, I'm going to have that letter framed, and have it hung in the sitting-room, so I can look at it every day. I love pleasant memories."

"I love something more substantial," remarked Plum.

"I'm glad you do. I'll tell you something substantial that you can do. Jest you and Tom Appleby and Eb Wilkes get off for a day next week and help Mr. Stark shingle that house. When an old house is to be fixed up, no one can tell when the job will end, and Ebenezer can do so much more, if you fellows help him out a little."

By noon the next day, which was Saturday, the two removals had taken place; and Winnie and her protégés were in their new home.

After dinner, Martha offered to wipe the dishes.

"Mrs. Martha Dalton," said Mandy, "you are a boarder, and boarders are not allowed to work in this house while

I'm running it. You jest go upstairs to your room and have a good nap."

Martha did so, but before her eyes were closed in sleep, the pillow was wet with tears. "Mrs. Martha Dalton — Mrs. Martha Dalton," she kept repeating to herself, and she fell asleep with the name she prized so much on her lips.

Grandsire Atwood made his way to the barn, and sharpened a scythe and a couple of sickles. "Jest to get up an appetite," as he told Stub.

Stub took little Davy under his special charge. A tour was made of the farm-yard and its attractions, consisting of the hennery, the piggery, the stalls for the horses, and the cow-barn, and then the duck-pond behind the barn was shown and extolled to the wondering child.

Time hung heavily on Winnie's hands. She, too, had offered to assist Mandy, and had met with a firm refusal.

"May I use your piano?" she asked.

"Oh, do play and sing," said Mandy. "It will make my work so much easier. Mother used to play and sing, but the only instruments I could ever learn to do anything with have been the dish-pan, the spider, and the wash-board."

Winnie passed the greater part of the afternoon at the piano. When Grandsire got tired, he came into the sitting-room, followed by Mandy, who led him to the biggest rocking-chair, telling him that it was to be his chair while he was her boarder. Winnie sang "Auld Robin Gray," and other old-time melodies to him, and under their spell he was soon fast asleep.

"Are you hungry?" asked Mandy, coming into the sitting-room. "Stub has to have an early supper Saturday night, because he works up to the barber shop. Will you have yours now, Miss Winton, or half an hour later with the rest of us?"

Winnie preferred to wait.

The Sunday before, the "Ebenezers" had been astonished at the forwardness of that "theatre girl" in coming to church, unattended ; but they were still more astonished when, the next day after taking up her residence with Miss Harkins, that young lady and Miss Winton, accompanied by the Atwood family, came down the church aisle and took seats in Miss Harkins' pew.

CHAPTER XXXI

SATURDAY NIGHT AT JAKE'S

"Why don't you come in to supper, Amri?" Mrs. Struthers screamed from the back porch. "Ef you don't, everything will be as cold as a stone."

Farmer Struthers moved leisurely across the farm-yard, and there was a quiet smile lurking about his mouth as he approached his wife, who looked the picture of vexation.

"Amri, you're enough to try the patience of Job. You're allus behind like an old cow's tail."

Farmer Struthers was a good-natured man and used to such explosions on the part of his better-half, so he rejoined: "Well, mother, ain't that better'n bein' allus at the front like an ugly bull's horns?"

This good-natured retort did not please Mrs. Struthers: "When we was fust married, I allus had the last word, but since you jined the Ebenezers, you're allus talkin' back, sense or no sense," and with this, as she imagined, withering remark, she went into the kitchen and took her seat at the supper table.

It took some time for Mr. Struthers to "wash up," and this further delay increased rather than diminished the excited nature of his wife's feelings.

"I ain't very hungry," said Amri, as he sat down to the table. "I eat some biled dinner over to Deacon Sprowle's and turnips is mighty fillin'."

Mrs. Struthers made no comment, but regarded her husband, who began his meal with a huge doughnut, finally taking half of it at one bite.

"Well, I call that downright wasteful," cried Mrs. Struthers.

"Why, what's the matter, Melie?"

"Why, eatin' doughnuts when you ain't hungry, considerin' there's so many poor people ain't got nothin'."

"Well, 'tain't my fault, Melie. Yer see, yer such a fine cook that even if a man ain't hungry, the good things start up his appetite and he has to give in. Your know, Melie, there ain't nobody can beat you a makin' doughnuts."

Mrs. Struthers was somewhat mollified by this compliment, but did not propose to give in so easily: "The last time Jason White was up here, he said that he had been over to Mrs. Thoroughbrace's, and she give him some doughnuts, and he said they were the best he ever eat in his life."

"Well," said Mr. Struthers, "I ain't eat none of Mrs. Thoroughbrace's doughnuts, and I don't want to. What kind o' pie is that you've got over there?"

"Rhubarb."

"Well, Melie, if there's anything I like in this world, next to doughnuts, it's grass pie. Jest cut that 'ere one into four pieces, and I think I can master one of 'em."

"Well, Amri, I think you're doin' pretty well for a man who ain't hungry."

"'Tain't my fault, Melie, it's the cookin'."

After supper, Mr. Struthers lighted his pipe and, seating himself in the wooden-bottomed arm-chair that stood beside the porch, tipped back against the side of the house and, for half an hour, was in a state of fumous comfort. Then he went into the house, changed his hat and coat, and was about to go out when his wife called:

"Where you goin', Amri?"

"Well, yer see, Melie, it's Saturday night and I'm goin' to pay my usual visit to Jake Clemson. Yer know, when I go to church with yer on a Sunday, yer allus want me to have a smooth face and my beard trimmed."

"Well, ef you're goin' to the barber shop, you'd better take yer latch-key. You never git home afore half past 'leven, and I think honest folks ought to be in bed by ten o'clock."

"Well, I don't know, Melie, as there's anything per-tic'ler dishonest in gittin' shaved. I allus thought the dishonest part o' it was shavin' the other feller," and smiling inwardly at what he considered a good joke, he started on his way to the village barber shop.

Jake Clemson was a "character." In the country, any man or woman who may have ideas different from his neighbors, or who acts in a way not strictly in conformity with prevailing custom, is usually said to be a character. Jacob Clemson had been the village barber for the past ten years and, during that time, had systematically pursued the course of life which he had laid out for himself. Upon coming to the town, he had induced one of the farmers to loan him enough money to put up a two-story building, having a barber shop on the lower floor and a sleeping room for himself on the second. The farmer had taken a mortgage upon the shop, Clemson agreeing to pay the interest and the principal in small quarterly payments. Each instalment, when due, had been forthcoming, and Jake Clemson's credit was as high as that of any man in town. His shop was open every morning at seven o'clock, and the proprietor was on hand, ready to attend to business, until seven at night, keeping open four hours longer on Saturday evenings. All his spare time was occupied in reading, and he had collected quite a library, the books of which he loaned out for a small weekly payment. He had a great love for birds, and scores of farmers' wives had purchased canary birds from him, which, after many disappointments, had either fallen prey to the family cat or died from overfeeding.

When Mr. Struthers arrived at the barber shop, he found both chairs taken and a dozen in waiting. Jake did all the shaving and hair-cutting, but on Saturday nights, he hired Stub Dutcher to lather, for he had more patrons than he could attend to, if obliged to do all the work himself.

Stub was so short in stature that he was obliged to stand upon a cricket. This position, usually at the right side of the patron, prevented him from giving that careful attention to the left side that he did to the right, and a common remark among Jake's customers was: "Jake shaves fust rate when he begins, but allus gits a leetle too careless towards the end, when his razor pulls a leetle."

There was another disadvantage arising from the fact that Stub was obliged to work wholly from the right-hand side. In lathering, he could not see the customer's left ear, so, at the conclusion of the operation, he invariably made a furtive dab with the brush, which resulted in filling the customer's left ear with soap. But no patron ever forced Stub to acknowledge that there was anything of the kind in his ear, for Stub always stoutly declared, after making an examination, that "there was nothing in it."

"It's nerves," he would say; and he persisted so strongly in this statement that the majority of Jake's customers came to the conclusion that there were nerves in the left ear.

"How are yer, Amri?" cried Ebenezer Stark, as Mr. Struthers entered the barber shop. "Guess yer must 've had a late supper. Yer usually git 'round earlier'n this. The way Jake's progressin', you won't git a chance fer a couple of hours."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Amri. "I've got the latch-key, and Melie don't expect me home 'fore 'leven. How are you gittin' on with that job down to Atwood's?"

"Not very fast. Ain't been able to git shingles as fast as I wanted 'em. They're buildin' a couple of houses over to Willoughby, and that took all they had on hand, and we've had to wait for some more to come up."

This conversation was interrupted by the entrance of two new-comers. One of them was Bat Mulvey, the other was a tall, dark-skinned young man, with a full, black beard and long, black hair. Mr. Clemson nodded familiarly, as is the custom with proprietors of barber shops, and said :

"Hello, Bat."

"Hello, Jake," said Mr. Mulvey. "I suppose ye know that my daughter Rosa has been and got married. This is her husband. He's what they call a Pole and, begorra, I can do a day's work quicker than I can spake his name, but I've got it writ down on a piece of paper here, and you can tear off what you want. You can be sure of one thing — this is the mon."

Jake took the piece of paper and attempted to read the following — but he didn't: "Czyrkstecheltzkoxotcheldoszeffski."

"Say, Stark," cried Jonathan Witherspoon, "hev the selectmen said anything to you about fixin' that hole in the bridge?"

"What hole?" asked Stark. "What kind of a joke are yer tryin' to get off now?"

"It's no joke," said Ebenezer; "at least, Thirza don't think so. You know Thirza Bush who does chores up to Deacon Dalton's? Well, she was bringin' home some washin' this morning, and comin' 'cross the bridge, her wooden leg got into a hole and broke it."

Stub Dutcher, who had been listening attentively, asked :
"Broke what, the hole in the bridge?"

"No, you greenhorn," said Witherspoon, "Thirza broke

her wooden leg. It was a good swamp hickory leg with a brass ferrule, made thirty-two years ago by Ezra Tobin, and will be a great loss to Thirza."

The house in which Caleb Leeds lived was situated not more than two hundred feet from the barber shop, and the old gentleman, who declared his intention of living to be a hundred, came over every Saturday night to have a shave, notwithstanding the fact that he was badly crippled with rheumatism.

"Your rheumatiz is pretty bad, isn't it, Uncle Caleb?" asked Plum Gifford, who sat next to him.

"Yes, if it wa'n't for my rheumatiz, I'd be feelin' just as well as I did forty year ago."

"Well, there isn't any need of your sufferin' any more with it," said Plum. "I was readin' in a New York paper that there is a sure cure for it."

"You don't say so! I've been lookin' for that sure cure for a good many years and I've tried about everything that money could buy and had some things give to me, but they didn't do me no good."

"Well," said Plum, "the paper said that if you caught an eel and skinned it, and then put the eel's skin 'round the afflicted part, it would stop the pain right off."

"Well, I don't take much stock in it," said Uncle Caleb, "but I s'pose the only way is to keep on tryin'."

"Well, the first chance I git," said Plum, "I'll go down to the pond and catch an eel, and you can try it. It won't cost you nothing."

There was a loud burst of laughter from a crowd of young fellows which had gathered about Tom Appleby. He was telling them a story about George Prescott, who had been down to Concord and bought a camera, which had three legs and a rubber ball attachment.

"I'll tell you the story," said Tom, "just as George

told it to me this morning. Says he : I went into Eliza Currier's pasture day before yesterday to take a view of our lovely village, and, while I was gettin' a focus, with my head covered up, I heard footsteps and, lookin' 'round, found a bull within a few feet of me, who acted as if he intended to have a horn in the proceedings at once. I've got rheumatism, but I never felt the least particle of lameness from the time I saw the bull until I reached the fence and had sailed over without touching it."

There was another burst of laughter, and Tom stopped until the fun was over :

"George said that the fact that his rheumatism disappeared so suddenly seems to support the Christian Science theory that human ailments are only imaginary. George says he was satisfied to watch the proceedings from his side of the fence, and, when he left, the bull was chewing the rubber ball. He went to look up Jim Currier to have him drive the bull away. When he got the machine back, he looked it over and found it full of pictures, one picture for each chew."

"That's a pretty good story, Tom," said Eben Wilkes, who had been a listener, "but I can tell you one that beats it all holler. I was over to Willoughby yesterday on business for the Squire, and Bert Craddock, who lives down by Willoughby pond, told me that he found a turtle in his yard yesterday morning. Bert says it weighed twenty-five pounds, and was covered with warts and carbuncles, and, accordin' to the wrinkles on his neck, was three hundred and seventeen years old, which Bert said would make him older than the hoss which Joe Billings sold to his wife's mother last week."

"What's Bert goin' to do with it?" asked one of the company.

"He sold it," said Eben. "He telegraphed right down

to Concord to the Chairman of the Board of Aldermen, and he answered right back that he would give five dollars for it. Bert said that if a city alderman couldn't git turtle soup at least once a week, he'd die. But I don't believe all that Bert Craddock tells me, not much."

"I ain't seed nothin' of Sim Luce for the past three days," said Mr. Struthers. "Hope he ain't sick."

Jake, who had just carried his razor from his customer's ear down to the shirt collar at one stroke, stopped work: "He ain't sick, but be ain't feelin' very well. You see, there was an accident up to his house Thursday night."

"Do tell!" said Mr. Struthers. "I hain't heard nothin' about it."

Jake pinched his customer's nose preparatory to shaving his upper lip:

"Well, you see, Jack Creedy's dog has been loafing around Sim's place, and Thursday night, Sim didn't get home until after dark. He saw something moving along the path near the barn and he thought it was Jack's dog. Sim sprinted for about twenty feet and then gave the animal a kick. If it had been the dog, it would have gone over the ridge-pole of the barn, sure. You know, Sim weighs nigh on to three hundred. Well, as he told me the story, his heels went out from under him and he sat down on something and flattened it out as thin as a horse blanket. But it wa'n't no dog. It was a hedgehog. He had more pints to him than a mariner's compass. It took Sim's hired man more'n two hours to pull out the splinters, and Sim's been eatin' his meals off the mantelpiece and sleepin' on his face ever since."

It is needless to say that this story, as well as those which preceded it, was greeted with shouts of laughter by the listeners, and then all waited anxiously to see who would tell the next story. No comic papers were taken

in Snickersville, but a Saturday night at Jake's provided a very good substitute, and the large patronage which he secured was due, not so much to the fact that closely shaven faces and neatly trimmed beards and hair were deemed absolutely necessary on Sunday, as to the fact that there was more fun at Jake's on Saturday night than could be found in the whole town during the rest of the week.

One by one, the customers had had their wants attended to, but, instead of leaving, they looked about for an empty seat and, if none could be found, contented themselves with leaning against the wall listening to the conversation.

"Well, boys," cried Enoch Scales, "ef ye turned out at town meetin' as well as you do here Saturday nights, we could have reform and retrenchment."

"Yes," cried Tom Appleby, "but if we did, the first item on the warrant would be to increase the salary of the town constable."

"Oh, you're as smart as one of my hogs," said Enoch. "Come up to my place; I've got room for another one."

"Don't forget to keep a place for yourself, Enoch," said Tom, and Mr. Scales felt that he was coming out at the little end of the horn.

"I've just got back from Willoughby," he said, "and the postmaster over there has just put up a notice and I thought I'd tell yer what it was for your benefit. He give me a notice that hereafter no fish, either fresh or stale, could be sent through the mails unless wrapped up. They are hard to handle and stamps don't stick to 'em." When Mr. Scales found a seat, he felt that he had got even with the boys.

He laughs best who laughs last, and Enoch was not disposed to give up the advantage which he had gained.

"I called in to Ruth Skinner's on my way back from Willoughby and found that the feller who come over from Peachley had got thrown out of his automobile was still there nussin' a sprained ankle."

Tom Appleby was not naturally suspicious and fell into the trap which Enoch had set for him. "I didn't hear about it," said he. "What caused the accident?"

"Why, yer see," said Enoch, "when Eli Burbank come down the road with his new pants on, the automobile shied and threw the Peachley feller out. Eli feels badly about the matter, but his mother, who cut the pants, says if the man sues for damages, she'll fight him through the courts from Dan to Beersheba."

"That's all right, Enoch," said Tom; "I own up beat. Have a cigar."

"Locked anybody up to-day?" asked Jake.

"No," said Enoch, "but I come near doin' it. I found two of our respected citizens, who shall be nameless, down by the pond, and they said they could see green crocodiles swimming 'round in it. They said they'd been down to Concord for a couple of days. I wonder what kind of stuff they sell down there, anyway. But I'm goin' Monday for a feller on a complaint made by the Ebenezer Society."

"Who are they after now?" asked Jason White. "Them fellers that belong to that sassiety are tryin' to run this town, but I just give 'em to understand that they can't run me. You know, my piggery isn't very far from the church and when they play the organ, my pigs — and they are the likeliest ones in the town — they just take hold and help. Well, last Sunday Deacon Dalton come over to my place and told me if I didn't stop them pigs a squealin', they'd have me up for a nuisance. Well, I just told him that he had been a big nuisance for so long, and

every day in the week too, that I guessed they could stand my pigs squealin' on Sundays. He threatened me with the law and, just to show him how frightened I was, I went and turned about two quarts of sour milk into the pig's trough, and if there wasn't a bobbery in that pig-pen for the next half hour, then I'm a liar. If the Deacon comes over again and finds fault, I'm goin' to tell him if he will supply the material and help me do the work, I'll gag the pigs and put plugs in their noses during service time, but he's got to come and help me take 'em out after they git through singing the Doxology."

"What was you goin' to tell us, Enoch?" asked Eben. "Anything in it for Squire Barnett?"

"Well, I don't know," said Enoch; "there may be if Hosy Fogg is a fighter, and I don't think he'll give in without carrying it up to the higher court."

"Why, what's he been doin'?" came in unison from a dozen voices.

"All I know," said Enoch, "is what Deacon Dalton told me. He says Hosy has got a pet owl. Yer see, the Deacon says that Hosy takes a piece of meat and, after attractin' the owl's attention to it, walks 'round the chair for an hour or so. The owl never takes his eyes from the meat, but turns its head 'round and 'round like a swivel. By the time Mr. Fogg has walked 'round the chair a hundred times or so, the owl is well wound up. Hosy then takes the poor creature by the topknot, holds him in the air, and lets his body whirl until the twist is all out of his neck. In the meantime, Hosy eats the meat. The Deacon says this may be fun for Hosy, but it's no amusement for the owl, and he's goin' to make a test case of it."

After getting worsted in the encounter with Enoch Scales, Tom Appleby had picked up a copy of the last issue of the *White Mountain Sun* and was busily engaged in reading it. He looked up suddenly, and exclaimed:

"That Hosity Fogg is no fool. Here's something good in the paper. Did you read this, Jake?" he asked, turning to the proprietor.

"How do I know, unless you tell me what it's about?"

"Well, I'll read it," said Tom, "and then you can let me know whether you've heard it before or not."

"As we do seven men's work every day and are too busy to hyper 'round nosing out things, we shall be pleased to receive items for these columns, if handed in early in the week. Arrivals of summer boarders, dog fights, marriage intentions, and escapes from bulls are always interesting and especially desired. Notices of big squash, double-yolked eggs, early peas, and improvements in hog troughs are of some interest to farmers, but do not seem to take a strong hold on the general public. Snake and fish items are overdone. No one believes in them and it is a waste of time to send them in."

During the last half hour, Stub Dutcher had looked up many times at the big face on the round clock which hung on the wall. He had been on his feet, or rather, on the cricket for more than three hours, and he was getting tired. Plum Gifford was a good-natured, tender-hearted fellow.

"Look here, Stub," he said, "you're all tired out. I know how to wield the brush, so you can sit down and tell the boys a story while I take your place. Is it all right, Jake?"

"If the customers are satisfied, I am," was the reply.

"Had any adventure this week, Stub?" asked Tom Appleby.

"Well, I got hold of one thing that the rest of you don't seem to know about. This morning I saw Cy Gridley workin' out on his potato patch, and he had on a suit of clothes that a scarecrow would have been ashamed to wear. I got over the fence and asked him if he had been

down to Boston. What fur? says he. To buy that suit, says I. He made a dive for me with the pitchfork, but I was too quick for him. Ma'am Gridley and I was allus on good terms, so I slid into the house later and asked her what the trouble was, and she told me the whole story.

"Seems Cy has been raisin' some fancy chickens and he's taken a great deal of pride in 'em, and Ma'am Gridley said he even went so fur as to keep the nest warm while the old hens went out to dig up mud worms and potato bugs. But about a week ago, he began to lose some o' the chickens. He was all worked up about it. He went over and told Captain Milliken, and the Captain said it was skunks, and he came over to Gridley's and set a trap to catch 'em. Well, last Thursday, Gridley went over to Willoughby and didn't git home 'til rather late at night, and as he come up to his place, he thought he saw his pet cat, and says he, Hello, Dandy, what are you doin' out here? Then he went up and patted Dandy on the back. But he soon found out that it wasn't Dandy. Well, he just took off them clothes as quick as he could and hung them up in the barn. Then he crawled in through the pantry winder and went to bed. He didn't want the story to git out, 'cause he knew Hossy Fogg would put it in the *Sun*.

"Well, next morning, about six o'clock, he heard a rap at the back door, and he looked out of the winder and there was a tramp who wanted something to eat. Cy told him they didn't serve breakfast for tramps until after they had their own, but if he wanted a suit of clothes, there was one hanging up in the barn that he might have. About nine o'clock, he asked Ma'am Gridley to bring him his best suit, 'cause he was goin' down to Concord that day, and then she up and told him she had given it a cleanin' with benzine and a brushin' while he was over to

Willoughby, and had hung it up in the barn to dry. Cy put on what togs he could find and went out to the barn, and found that the tramp had made no mistake, for the aroma was just as strong as ever. Cy sent his measures over to Willoughby, and Ma'am Gridley told me he was expectin' to git the suit to-day, so he could go to church to-morrow. I told Ma'am Gridley I wouldn't say anythin' about it to Hosy Fogg, but, of course, if some of you fellers tell him, I can't help it."

The last man had been shaved, the last beard had been trimmed, and the last head of frowzy hair had been cut. Jake's business had been good from a financial point of view, and the evening had been spent in the same sociable way in which it had been passed for many years. There was a chorus of good-nights, and the old and young started for their respective homes. Stub helped Jake to clear up and put the shop in order, and the clock on the Town Hall struck eleven as Jake put out the lights and went upstairs, not to go to bed at once, but to pass an hour or two in reading a good book of travels in which he had become greatly interested.

Stub Dutcher, though tired, was happy, for, in his pocket, he had the pay for his evening's work — a half dollar — and on his way home, he was devising sundry ways to spend it — one of the principal items being some candy for little Davy. Until he had met the child, he had had no one to love, and now his whole heart had gone out to the little boy. It is love which works what is known as a change of heart. This change had come to poor, deformed Stub Dutcher, and if little Davy had been menaced by a mad dog, Stub would have grappled with the animal and have given his own life, if necessary, to save that of his little friend.

CHAPTER XXXII

DOCTOR DANBY'S DEFEAT

Winnifred enjoyed the early morning air in the country. She told Mandy that one who had always had a chance to breathe it could not appreciate it as she did. The contrast between the glaring footlights and the often noisome odors of the theatre and the cool, moist, morning air, being gradually warmed by the rays of the rising sun, was so great that Winnifred thought she was in a new world.

Rising early as she did, she had plenty of time for her morning walk, returning in season to take breakfast with Mandy and the farm-hands. It was usually an hour later before Grandsire Atwood, Martha, and little Davy made their appearance.

The conversation at the breakfast table was not always of the highest order of refinement, but she found Stub Dutcher, Bat Mulvey, and Jeff Smith to be a very engaging and amusing trio, especially when their conversation was interrupted, from time to time, by witty remarks or wise comments from the hostess, Miss Amanda Harkins.

One morning, Bat Mulvey and Jeff Smith got into a discussion as to which was the smarter man — meaning by that designation the one who had best maintained his own part and had not been over-reached by another. The challenge was made by Mr. Mulvey, but Mr. Smith refused to take it up.

"I ain't no match for yo'," said Mr. Smith, "and I own right up. I ain't done no blowin' about being smart since that millionaire got the best of me down to St. Augustine, Florida, when I was a waitah at de big hotel down there."

"An' how did the millionaire git the best of yer, Jeff?" asked Mr. Mulvey. "Was it a money matter?"

Jeff laughed, showing two rows of even, white teeth: "Yes indeed-ee, it was a money matter, shuah."

"Please tell us the story," said Winnifred. "You ought not to be ashamed if a millionaire got the best of you. We all have to suffer that way."

"Well, it was jes' this way," said Mr. Smith, "the head waitah come to me and, seys he, Jeff, there's a millionaire a comin' here to-morrow mornin' and I'm gwine to put him at your table. Now, yo' jes' treat him right and yo' won't lose nuffin, but of course I specks to come in for my share. Them head waitahs git the best of us every time, and if we kicks, they fire us."

"Well, I would get fired the first day," said Mandy. "I wouldn't stand any such imposition."

"Then you wouldn't have no job, Miss Mandy," said Jeff. "Well, the millionaire come along and I waited on him right up to the handle. I didn't wait for him to ask for nuffin—I jes' had it right there. When he got through, he got up and he seys: Very good, Jeff. There's somethin' for yo' under de plate. When he was gone, I looked and there was somethin' under de plate — one cent."

"Begorra!" said Mr. Mulvey. "He must've made a mistake. He'd probably left a smaller piece if he'd had it. That was a good joke on yer, Jeff."

"Oh, that wasn't the joke," said Mr. Smith. "He stopped there four weeks and, after every meal, he left a cent under de plate. Well, I got mad and I give every other one to the head waitah and told him that was his half, and the most of de others I pitched coppers with and lost 'em. When he had been there 'bout a month, seys he, one mornin': Jeff, I'm gwine away. Where are those cents I give yo'? Put 'em on de table here. I had 'bout six of

'em left, and I fished 'em out o' my pockets and put 'em de table. Says he: Is that all yo' have? I told him that the rest of 'em had gone I didn't know where. Well, it's your own fault, says he. I had intended to give yo' a dollar fo' each one o' those cents if yo' had saved 'em. He give me six dollars and a wink, and then he went."

"Holy saints!" cried Mr. Mulvey. "If yer'd saved them all, yer'd had eighty-four dollars."

"Yes," said Jeff, "that was the joke on me."

After breakfast, Winnifred went out upon the piazza with some fancy work, in the doing of which she took great pleasure, and seated herself in the old-fashioned rocking-chair which Mandy had brought down from the garret for her. It had been rather disreputable in appearance when pulled out from under the eaves among the cobwebs, but Stub had given the wood-work a coat of red paint and had freshened up the flags with some varnish.

Winnifred was intent upon an intricate pattern when she heard a voice call, "Miss Winnifred," and looking up, she saw Eben Wilkes.

"Say, Miss Winnifred, can I see yer alone somewhere where no one will see us or overhear what I'm tellin' yer?"

It took but a moment for Winnifred to put her work on the chair and run down the steps: "We will go out to the barn, Eben. The men are working in the field, and we shall be alone."

When they reached the barn, Winnie said: "It must be something important, Eben, to make you come away from the office to see me."

"It is — something mysterious — and I thought you ought to know it. You know I'm a friend of yours, Miss Winnifred, and anything I can do for you I'll do without —" He was going to say, "without pay," but on second

thought, finished by saying, "and I won't charge yer very much, either."

"You must not charge me anything," said Winnifred. "I have no money to spare."

"Oh, I don't want money. I wouldn't take it, but I would like something that don't cost you nothing, but it would be worth more than money to me."

There was such a look of admiration in his eyes, as well as a roguish twinkle, that Winnie divined his meaning: "Well, how many?" she asked.

After thinking the matter over, Eben replied: "Two, one before I tell yer anything and, then if you don't think it's worth more'n one, I don't git the second, but I shall be sure of the first."

The situation had its serious and ludicrous aspects. If Deacon Dalton or Abigail March, or, in fact, any of the Ebenezer Society should see Eben kissing her, she would become town talk in less than twenty-four hours. The whole idea seemed preposterous, and yet she knew that Eben had something of importance to communicate — something that she ought to know — and, after all, it was, as Eben said, a very small price to pay for a big secret.

"Mind now, Eben, on the cheek."

As the young man retreated with reddened cheeks — she felt that there was a slight flush, at least, on one of her own — she cried, rather impatiently: "Now, what is it, Eben? Don't keep me waiting."

"Well, yer see," said Eben, "Squire Barnett has never had any secrets from me about his business 'til lately. I mean by lately, since that woman from somewhere or ruther, who is dressed up so nice and wears so many diamonds, come to see him. Two or three days afterwards, I opened the door and went into the private office, same as I had always been in the habit of doin', and he was

readin' a big sheet of paper that he was holdin' up before him. As soon as he saw me he yelled: Get out! What do you come in here for without knockin'?

"Well, I just felt like knocking him. That was the fust time he had ever spoken to me that way. I ain't naterally suspicious, but I said to myself, somethin's up and I'll keep my eyes open. That night I looked for the letters and there was one addressed to the Secretary of State, at Butte, Montana. I didn't think of it at fust, but it come to me afterwards that, perhaps, it was where that woman lived. Well, I watched the mail and about a week afterwards there come a letter from Montana with a big seal on the outside of it, and I made up my mind that was the answer."

"Yes, yes! Go on!" cried Winnifred.

"Well, what happened next was the most curiousest of all. The Squire had always left the letters with me to give Enoch Scales, but that night he walked clear over to Enoch's house to carry them himself. I wa'n't goin' to git left in any such way as that, so I slid 'round to Enoch's house while he was milkin' — you know he doesn't go with the mail 'til after he's got through milkin' — and I jest opened the mail-bag and I looked at the letters 'til I found the one I was after. It was addressed to Mrs. Harrison Goss, Dolby, Montana, and, down in the corner of the envelope, was writ, Dalton's Mines. Now, what do yer think of that? Is the secret worth the cost of the trade?"

"Yes — on the other cheek. I'll think it over, Eben. Your information is valuable, but I don't know just how to use it."

"Well, I'm glad," said Eben, "that you don't think I've cheated yer, 'cause I was thinkin' if you thought you had paid too much for it, I'd be willin' to give 'em both back."

"Oh, no," said Winnie, laughing; "it was a fair trade and you have earned your pay."

Winnie went back to the house and took her accustomed seat, but the fancy work had lost its attraction. Eben had seen Mr. Barnett reading a paper, the contents of which he evidently wished no one else to know. Then he had written to Montana, probably to learn where Mrs. Goss lived. Martha had told her about meeting with that woman, and she remembered that Mrs. Goss had said that Mr. Dalton had been a very rich man. It did not take Winnie long to come to the conclusion that this wealth must have consisted of mining property. Yes, it was all plain. Mr. Barnett had found Martha Dalton's marriage certificate and was going to send it to Mrs. Goss — and probably get well paid for doing so. She arose, clenched her hands, and walked excitedly up and down the piazza.

"What a shame!" she cried. "How can a man who calls himself a gentleman do such a mean, cowardly thing? And he belongs to the Ebenezer Moral Reform Society! I know so much, and I will find out more — and I will beat him at his own game. It is a great point gained to know that the certificate is in existence. But, if I should confront him, he would deny it and I should have no proof. No, I must wait and see what time will bring."

She was about to resume her seat and her work when she heard a childish voice and, turning, saw Martha standing in the doorway with little Davy beside her.

"Oh, Martha," she cried, "it is a beautiful morning. Let us take a walk — or, what is just as good, let us go out in the orchard and sit down under one of the big trees. It will do you and Davy good."

Winnifred found it hard to engage Martha in conversation. Winnie knew that she was mourning the loss of her husband, for she had seen her clasp little Davy convul-

sively in her arms and heard her say: "Oh, you poor, fatherless, little boy!"

Winnifred's thoughts, too, were busy, and had it not been for little Davy, who was full of life and insisted on romping and playing, the half hour in the orchard would not have been productive of much enjoyment. Martha seemed to wish to be alone with her own thoughts and, without a word of apology, arose and walked slowly away, leaving little Davy with Winnie.

Winnie could not get what had been told her out of her mind. It must be the certificate that Squire Barnett had found. She could see it before her eyes and read there the names of David Dalton and Martha Atwood, but she could not decipher the name of the town or that of the clergyman who had joined them, as the certificates read, in the holy bonds of matrimony.

Davy, left to himself, had wandered away. Winnie looked up and called to him to come back. Just then, a figure sprang from behind one of the big trees, caught up little Davy, put him on his shoulder, and ran swiftly towards her. It was Stub Dutcher.

"Where's Martha?" he asked.

"Way over there, said Winnie, pointing; "she's out of sight now."

"Doctor Danby wants to see her."

"What for?"

"He didn't say."

Winnie imagined what it was. They would never cease to persecute that poor girl. "I will go and see Doctor Danby," she said. "You take care of little Davy."

"Pig-a-back, pig-a-back!" cried the child, and, a moment later, he was mounted on Stub's back, and away they went, the child screaming with delight.

When Winnie arrived at the house, she found Doctor

Danby waiting at the foot of the steps. "It is very kind of you to call, Doctor Danby," said Winnie. "Of course, this is not a professional visit — I am happy to say that none of us are sick."

"Where is Martha?" asked the Doctor, sharply.

"She is out in the orchard enjoying the morning air," Winnie replied.

"Where's Atwood?"

"I don't know," said Winnie. "Perhaps he has gone down to the store to see Captain Milliken."

"I want to see Martha."

"What for?" asked Winnie.

The Doctor turned towards her: "Who are you? Are you Martha's keeper?"

"I am her friend. What do you want of her?"

The Doctor bowed: "I want to see her so as to give an opinion as to whether she's demented or not — your ladyship."

Winnie's anger was excited both by the manner in which the Doctor spoke and the supercilious glance which he cast at her:

"Why don't you Snickersville folks let those poor people alone? What have they ever done to you, or the numbskulls who sent you?"

"Your assurance, miss, is astounding, astonishing, unheard of, monstrous, absolutely appa-a-ling!"

Unconsciously, Winnie relapsed into theatrical slang: "My gracious! What am I up against?"

The Doctor scowled: "Against a man who does his duty without fear or favor, or cajolin', or wheedlin', or befoolment, or beffobbery."

Winnie folded her hands and looked the personification of meekness. The Doctor felt encouraged: "Now that I've silenced you, let me ask you again, Where is Martha?"

Winnifred, in a childish voice, said : " If you please, sir, I told you that she is out in the pasture playing with a little lamb."

" In the pasture playing with a little lamb? That's an unfavorable symptom. I want ten minutes interview with her."

Winnifred looked up and, to her astonishment, found that Grandsire Atwood was standing in the doorway and had probably overheard the greater part, if not all, of her conversation with the Doctor.

" I will go into the orchard and see her," said the Doctor.

Grandsire Atwood came quickly down the steps and touched the Doctor's arm : " If it don't make no difference, I'll go with you. It's no symptom her playin' with a lamb. She's always done it."

" Always done it !" cried the Doctor. " That's worse still ! Go back, Atwood ! I want to see her alone," and he walked swiftly away.

Tears came into the old man's eyes : " Oh, miss, if that man says he thinks she's a mite crazy, they'll send her away. Then, what will little Davy and I do in the nice, snug house you are goin' to give us ? "

" Don't worry, Grandsire," said Winnie. " I think I can fix it all right with the Doctor. You know he likes me."

The old man put his hand over his eyes and looked in the direction which the Doctor had gone. " Can you see him, anywhere ? " he asked. " I wonder what he's sayin' to her."

" You had better go in, Grandsire," said Winnie. " I will see the Doctor when he gets back and, after he has gone, I will come in and tell you what he said."

The old man obeyed her. Winnie took up her fancy

work, but after half a dozen stitches, threw it down impatiently. It seemed an hour instead of ten minutes before the Doctor returned. When he did, she ran to meet him.

"Well, Doctor, what is your decision?"

The Doctor took a writing tablet from his pocket: "Crazy — crazy as a loon."

"Crazy?" cried Winnifred. "See here, Doctor, it will be a terrible thing to send that poor girl to an insane asylum. She's not bad, and only needs good care; but, if they take her from her poor father and little Davy, she will soon be a raving maniac. Suppose it were your own daughter."

"It is no use, madam. I never had a daughter. Duty is duty."

Winnie then made a false step: "I agree with you, Doctor, that duty is duty, but I know that money is money. I am not very rich, just at present, but if a hundred dollars —"

"A bribe!" screamed the Doctor. "You offer it to me so that you can proclaim it broadcast that I, Daniel Danby, M. D., a member of the Ebenezer Moral Reform Society, sold his honor, his integrity, his manhood, his s-s-soul for the lucre of an adventuress. It is appa-alling!"

Winnifred saw that she had made a mistake and must retrieve herself. The Doctor was looking at his tablet and Winnie tried to read what he had written.

"My dear Doctor, is that your report?"

"Yes, my report to the selectmen."

"And are you going to tell them that she is crazy?"

"No, crazy is not a professional term. She is mentally deranged — or, more properly, suffering from dementia."

Winnifred leaned over so that she could see what was on the tablet: "Oh my, Doctor, you have spelled mentally with one l."

The Doctor put the tablet in his pocket : " On my soul, I believe you are crazier than she is. I don't wish to be bothered with you any more."

" Just a moment, Doctor." She took a letter from her bosom. " I have a letter here, Doctor, in which I think you will be interested. You see, I keep it near my heart. You probably know that we people of the stage often receive little attentions from persons in the audience."

The Doctor shook his head : " Thank Heaven ! I know nothing about play-acting people."

" But listen, Doctor. The writer of this letter goes into raptures over the beautiful Winnifred Winton. In fact, he must have been quite beside himself when he wrote it. He expresses his admiration in the most gushing manner and ends the epistle by inviting Miss Winton, meaning me of course, to take a moonlight ride with him and a supper at Mr. Riccadonna's."

" The addle-pated fool ! He must be a loafer !" cried the Doctor.

" Oh, no," said Winnie ; " he stands high in this town as a moral example, a shining light, a prominent worker in the Ebenezer Moral Reform Society — your son, Paul Danby. When the good people of Snickersville get hold of this, how they will exult, gloat, sizzle, howl, denounce, befuddle. It is appa-a-alling ! Make your report that you find Martha mentally sound with two l's and this letter is yours. If not, I shall give it to Mr. Fogg of the *Sun* ; he is a friend of mine."

The Doctor seemed crestfallen : " Does anyone else know of this ?"

" Not a soul," Winnie replied. " It is not nice of me, I know, to do this, but I fight with the only weapon I have."

The Doctor crumpled up the leaf upon which he had written and threw it into the bushes. It took several

minutes for him to write out the desired report, but Winnie waited patiently.

"Will that do?" he asked.

Winnie read :

"This is to certify, that I, Daniel Danby, M. D., have made an examination of Miss Martha Atwood, as requested by the selectmen of the town of Snickersville, New Hampshire, in accordance with an order issued by Justice John Rodgers, and find that the said Martha Atwood is mentally sound.

DANIEL DANBY, M. D."

"That's very nice of you, Doctor. Here's the letter. Please give your son Paul my kind regards and tell him, if you think best, that in writing it he did a great service to my dear friend Martha."

"U-u-u-umph!" growled the Doctor, as he drove away.

Grandsire Atwood, who had been looking out of the sitting-room window, came out upon the piazza as soon as he saw the Doctor drive away. "Miss Winnifred, what did he say?"

"Oh, he said she's all right and she's going to stay with you and little Davy, and you are going to live happy and have no more trouble."

The old gentleman waved his hat in the air and cried: "Hurrah! Hurrah!! Martha, my girl!" Then came a revulsion. He sank down upon the steps and began to cry.

Martha, who had just come in from the orchard, ran forward, exclaiming: "Why, father, what is the matter?"

"Don't speak, Grandsire," said Winnifred; "have your cry out and you will feel better. It's all about the house, Martha. You know, Mr. Stark has been getting along slowly and your father feels as though you were too much of a burden upon me by staying here."

At that moment, Plum Gifford made his appearance:

"Glad to see yer, Miss Winton, and now I want to tell yer we've got the ell on Grandsire's house shingled and put the new winders in the sunny side o' the settin'-room."

Winnifred was delighted at this opportune change in the conversation. "Won't that be nice, Grandsire?" she said. "You will be as snug as a bug in a rug."

"Now, if you want to stand the expense, miss, we will put new railings 'round the stoop. If it was me, I should change the buttery and put it on the south side, and yer ought to have a new door on the smoke-house."

"That's all right, Plum," said Winnifred. "You tell Mr. Stark that I wish him to fix it up just as you have described it."

Grandsire Atwood arose and took both of Winnifred's hands in his trembling palms: "I'm eighty-three year old, miss, and, if I live to be eighty-three year older, which I don't expect to, I'll never forget what you've done for Marthy, little Davy, and me."

Winnifred took Plum's arm and walked down to the road with him.

"Are you tired, father?" asked Martha.

"No, not a mite. Why, Marthy, I'm sprier now than the young ones. I made Plum hustle to keep up at rakin' yesterday. By vum! You can ask him if I didn't, and little Davy here. Davy is a great help in the hay-field. He wanted to ride on the mowing machine.

"Martha, we mowed the grass 'round your mother's grave yesterday. You have heard me tell about my first wife, Marthy. She was a good woman, same as your mother was. We mowed it gently, you know, just as gently as we could. Rose-leaves had fallen on it so thick that it looked like a mantle with beautiful rainbow colors, and Davy scooped the rose-leaves in his little hands and wanted to know what made it look so pooty there."

"Poor mother," said Martha; "we shall never see her face again. Oh, father, what terrible things we do for those we love, for I did love him and went with him; we were married, father."

"But she never would believe agin you, Marthy. She allers said he'd come sometime and clear you afore them all. She would watch from the winder and every team acoming up the hill, she would wipe her glasses and look agin, and 'fore she died, she asked for the red stockin's she knit for ye when ye was two year old, and when she died there was one of 'em in her poor hand.

"But here is Stub comin' with little Davy on his back. Don't cry, don't cry any more, child. Trust Heaven's marcy and hope that it will come out all right."

CHAPTER XXXIII

ROBBING THE MAIL

It was a pleasant, sunshiny afternoon in the early part of June. Winnifred had partaken, with the others, of one of Mandy's appetizing dinners. Grandsire Atwood, Martha, and little Davy had gone upstairs for their afternoon naps. Mandy and Stub Dutcher were busy with the housework. The whole afternoon was before Winnifred, but what could she do with it?

She put on her broad-brimmed straw hat, and went into the orchard. Both Grandsire Atwood and Mandy had told her that it was going to be a great apple year. She looked up, and there seemed to be every indication that their word would prove true.

The broad-limbed apple trees threw great patches of shade athwart the grass, and beyond there were sunny places which made the shadows look even denser.

"So it is with life," mused Winnifred, as she walked slowly, she cared not whither. "Days full of brightness followed by others full of dark shadows."

So far, her life had been full of sunshine of a certain kind, but she was beginning to realize that it was not the sunlight of nature — but one of man's invention. Then she thought of poor Martha, whose life had had but a few rays of brightness, followed by what seemed to be never-ending, impenetrable gloom.

She laughed aloud. She was thinking of Dr. Danby and his ignominious defeat. She had taken his report as to Martha's condition to the selectmen, and the poor girl would be persecuted no more, for the present, at least.

But the certificate? From what Eben had told her, she felt sure that it was in Mr. Barnett's possession. Mrs. Goss was rich, would pay for it, and the lawyer would sell it.

Beyond the edge of the orchard a little brook ran through Mandy's land, emptying into the pond a mile farther on. She could hear the little streamlet singing as it flowed over or about the rocks which filled its bed and when it brushed against its flower-tipped banks. The words of a song which she had often sung came into her mind. She was alone with nature — the most appreciative and responsive of audiences. And she sang the song — she confessed to herself — better than ever before.

What a beautiful sight it is to me,
As I gaze at the stream that's rolling free,
On towards its ocean home;
I can ne'er restrain my wish to go,
On its bosom blue my boat to row,
'Round all its curves to roam.

Gentle river, lovely river,
O'er thy waters riding,
Lovely river, gentle river,
With thy current gliding;
Gentle river, lovely river,
From thy banks are ringing,
Echo, echo! Echo, echo!
Echoes of our singing.

She sat down by the brook-side and looked into the jumping, gurgling, laughing water. It was a pretty face that was mirrored there; but she was more intent upon her thoughts than upon Nature's photograph of her own comeliness.

There were fish in the brook, but Winnifred was not an ichthyologist, and could not call them by name. What was that which came with a slow, sinuous motion through the water? It looked like a snake. Perhaps it was a

water snake. And with that womanly fear which the passage of six thousand years has not abated, she rose quickly, caught up her skirts, and fled to the shelter of an adjacent tree.

"Just like the world," thought Winnifred. "Those poor little innocent fish are preyed upon by that monster. It made me think of Mr. Barnett —" and she shuddered.

Reclining lazily in the shade of the tree, she looked out upon the scene before her. On the other side of the brook, half a dozen of Mandy's sleek, plump cows were grazing. They had pure water to drink, succulent grass for food, and a large clump of trees supplied grateful shade when needed. Beyond was a wide expanse of grass-land, lavishly sprinkled with red clover blossoms, nearly ready for the mowing machine — "the executioner," thought Winnifred. "Why are so many of Nature's beautiful creations cut down ruthlessly by man?" Beyond the grass-land rose many hills, or little mountains, forming part of the circlet which held Snickersville within its embrace. Above all, the blue sky, with here and there a cloud-chariot speeding along under the influence of an invisible driver.

The scene was pastoral, beautiful — but it had lost its charm for Winnifred. "Perhaps it was the snake," she thought, as she retraced her steps towards the house. She looked at her watch — she had been gone less than an hour. What should she do next? Then she remembered that she had not been to see Tildy Scales for more than a week. "I will go — no, I will not — yes, I will. No, it is too long a walk on a hot day." She stopped under a tree and decided. Then she seemed to hear a voice say, "Go, for my sake." "It sounded like Martha's voice," she thought. She looked up into the tree. "What is the matter with me? If I am not careful, Doctor Danby will

have me put in a straight-jacket. What nonsense! I will go and see Tildy."

She found Tildy sitting up in bed. "I am much better, Miss Winnie. The medicine you got from New York for me is powerful stuff. It seemed to take right hold of my innards just as soon as I swallowed it, and Enoch says he's going to raise my board if I eat so much."

"Food is the best medicine," said Winnifred. "Eat all you can; Enoch is only joking." Winnifred took up a book in which she had left a book-mark more than a week before. "Do you remember where I left off, Tildy?"

"Oh, yes. It was where the young man had made up his mind to propose to the girl he'd been in love with so long; and night's when I couldn't sleep, I've just laid and wondered how it all came out."

Just before Enoch came in, Winnifred closed the book. The mystery was solved. Tildy clasped her hands tightly together and a smile came upon her thin, wan face.

"I'm so glad he got her at last, Miss Winnie, ain't you? It must be so nice to get what you've worked for and waited for so long."

Winnifred was thinking of the certificate.

"Don't you think so, Miss Winnie?" persisted Tildy.

"Oh, yes, certainly, it must be." But she was still thinking of the lost paper which Martha had waited for so long.

Enoch looked into the room. "How'd do, miss? Been cheering Tildy up a little? She's missed you lots. She says she's going to get out of bed soon, but I tell her that if she keeps on eatin' the way she has for the past two weeks, she'll be so fat she can't. Every time you've been over here you promised to come out and see my pigs. No time like the present, as the hangman said when he put the rope 'round the feller's neck — but that feller's time

was most up." And Enoch gave vent to what Tildy called one of his "horse laughs."

"I'll go with you," said Winnie.

As they passed through the kitchen, Enoch pointed to a pile of letters on the table.

"There's to-night's mail, but I can't take it over till I've fed the pigs and milked the cows. Then I hitch up and drive over to Willoughby."

They were walking towards the piggery: "I don't get my supper any night but Monday 'til I get back. You see, I have to cook it, and feed Tildy, and if I stayed 'round, I'd be late for the mail."

"You need a wife, Mr. Scales."

"Well, d'ye know, I've been thinkin' that, an' I'd had one 'fore this if I'd been sure Tildy was bedrid for life, or was goin' to peter out. But while there's life, there's hope, so I've hung on, an' so has Tildy. Say, did yer ever see a finer lot of pigs?"

Winnie felt called upon to express her admiration of the occupants of the piggery. She had always heard that pigs were the most unclean of animals, and she had never eaten pork, but these pigs were white and clean, and the piggery was littered with hay and straw, and was not at all uninviting in appearance.

"I know what yer thinkin'," said Enoch. "You always thought that pigs were dirty and pig-pens dirtier, and most on 'em are; but you give a pig a chance to keep clean and there ain't no animal that will do it better than they will. Why, I rub my pigs' down every morning and that's more than I do for myself. Now yer here, I wish ye'd come up in the barn and look at my cows. They're jest coming in. Do yer hear that bell? That's old Mary, and where she goes, t'others foller — just like a flock of sheep."

After the cows had been inspected and duly praised, Enoch turned abruptly, and said : " I've been wondering if you're a married woman or not. I'm up to stage tricks, and I know you theatre folks are apt to be quiet when yer spliced."

Winnifred was infected with the humor of the situation : " No, but I'm dying to be."

" Well, now, maybe we could strike up a trade. You've seen my pigs and cows, and I've got a farm of most three hundred acres ; the next best one in town to Mandy Harkins's — hers can't be beat and there ain't no use tryin'."

Winnifred looked up inquiringly, and Enoch felt encouraged.

" There's one of the finest openings at my place for a young woman."

Winnifred did not intend to allow him to come to the point too soon. " Oh, you want to hire a woman ?"

" Hire ? Gosh, no ! What's the use of payin' out money when I can get one for nothin' ? But she'll have the run of the hull place, and after the chores are done at night, she can sing hymns with me. I'm a bass singer. She can have all she wants to eat, an' a good pair of shoes the day she's married, and if she has high notions, there's a new tooth-brush that Tildy's bought, and if Tildy dies, she can have it for her very own."

" You'd indulge a woman so she'd be good for nothing. You'd spoil her."

Enoch chuckled : " W-a-l, if I see she was takin' advantage, I'd reason with her." He drew closer to Winnifred and made a lunge at her with his forefinger, his face covered with a broad grin. " I watched you that night when you was cuttin' up yer rinktums at the Town Hall. Ye did it up real slick."

"Are you sure it was I?"

Enoch looked serious: "Wall, no, I ain't, 'less you got a double scalp, and two sets o' hair. How in the old scratch do you manage to shift?"

"I change it when I go on the stage. I take this hair off and put the other on."

Enoch whistled. "Then ye haven't got any real hair?"

"Oh, no."

Enoch moved away. "What does the top of your head look like — a' egg?"

"What a joke," thought Winnifred. "No, like an orange. I have to keep it painted, so I won't take cold."

Enoch whistled again. "By gosh, the longer I live the more I learn. I think yer just the wife I want. The half hour ye'd waste combin' your hair in the mornin', you could be out feedin' the pigs. Come, what do ye say? Marry me and ye'll have fun to throw away."

Winnifred had been slowly edging towards the barn door, followed closely by Enoch.

"Wall, what do you say? Yell it out. You can have all I've promised yer. There's nothin' too good for my wife."

Winnifred dropped her eyes demurely: "This is so sudden, Mr. Scales. I feel deeply honored by your proposal. Will you forgive me? I had no right to encourage your attentions. The fact is — don't tell anybody, will you — I'm already engaged."

"Thunder!" cried Enoch. "Why didn't yer tell me so before?" He looked at her keenly. "Where's yer ring? I don't see none."

"Well, to be honest with you, Mr. Scales, I had to sell it to get money enough to pay my board here through the summer. I'm so sorry; if you'd seen my ring this would not have happened."

"Well, I don't know the other feller, but I think you've made a mistake. P'raps you'll see it some day."

"If I do, Mr. Scales, I promise you I'll come back. Those shoes and the new tooth-brush are inducements which I could not resist, if I were free."

Winnifred gathered up her skirts, and ran swiftly through the long grass to the house.

As she entered the kitchen, her eyes fell upon the pile of letters on the table. "How careless!" she exclaimed. Enoch had thrown the letters into some water which had been spilled upon the table. Winnifred took a towel from over the sink, and, picking up each, wiped it carefully. When she came to the last one, she found it was so thoroughly saturated that the gum had lost its hold and it came open.

She turned it over and read :

"Mrs. Harrison Goss,
Dolby City,
Montana."

In the lower left-hand corner was written "Dalton's Mines," while in the upper right-hand corner was printed : "Abel Barnett, Counsellor-at-Law, Snickersville, N. H."

The letter fell from Winnifred's grasp as though it had been made of lead. That voice from the tree had directed her aright. Providence had led her footsteps. Should she read the letter? Why not? It was open, and, besides, the writer of it was a criminal. She personified Justice! She stooped and picked up the letter. How nervous she felt with it in her hand. How pleased at the prospect of helping Martha. An old-fashioned secretary stood near the window. She looked out. It was on the opposite side of the house from the barn. Enoch could not see her and he would not get through his milking for an hour. She tiptoed to the door of Tildy's room and looked in. Tildy was fast asleep, with a smile on her face. Quick as a flash came into Winnifred's mind something her mother had taught her when she was a little girl.

"God giveth His beloved sleep," she said softly, as she went back to the desk. She opened the letter and dried its clinging folds with a towel. Then she read :

"MY DEAR MRS. GOSS :

"I have received your letter in which you informed me that if I would send the - - - by express, c. o. d., the sum agreed upon would be paid upon its delivery. With all due respect to you, madam, I think this a very dangerous way to send a document of such great value to you, and of comparatively great value to me, considering my circumstances. Pardon me, madam, but my legal instinct and training prompt me never to give up a valuable paper until I receive the *quid pro quo* in hand at the same time.

"I have, therefore, determined, as soon as my business engagements will permit, to come to Dolby City and make the transfer in person.

"Trusting that this arrangement will be satisfactory, I remain, madam,

Yours very respectfully,

ABEL BARNETT."

There was paper, pen, and ink in the old secretary. Winnifred quickly made a copy of the letter, and hid it in her bosom. She then replaced Mr. Barnett's letter in the envelope, pressing the fold down firmly, rubbing it with her finger-nail, with the hope that enough gum remained to keep it sealed. Then she put it in the middle of the pile of letters on the table.

She left the house quietly and started homeward. She had to pass through a stretch of woodland. When secure from human gaze, she stamped her foot upon the ground and cried :

"I've a good mind to confront him. But that would do no good. He would declare that I made up the letter myself. If I went through town and told the shameful story, but few would believe me. I might tell Mr. Merrill — but no, I will ask no one to help me. I will wait, and watch, and work, and in the end I will unmask this honor-

able gentleman who means to sell the honor of a good woman, and the birthright of an innocent child, for money. Bah ! I believe, after all, I hate men — or a great many of them."

CHAPTER XXXIV

JOE MIGGLES

THE next morning after her visit to Tildy Scales, Winnifred asked Stub Dutcher to tell Eben Wilkes that she wished to see him as soon as possible.

"I'll bring him right up here, if you want him," said Stub.

"Oh, no, when he goes to dinner will be time enough."

Winnifred usually passed the morning hours in the sitting-room. Grandsire Atwood would make his way thither as soon as he heard the notes of the piano, and ensconcing himself in the chair which had been given him for his special use, would listen with marked evidences of delight to the old-time melodies which Winnifred took great pleasure in playing for him.

Martha had insisted upon helping Mandy with her housework, declaring that she felt much better when she had something to do. Mandy had, at last, capitulated gracefully, and a strong friendship had grown up between the two women. While they were at work, little Davy played in the farm-yard, running in from time to time to bring something he had found, which, in his eyes, was a treasure of great value.

About eleven o'clock there came a ring at the front door-bell, which Winnifred answered. When she opened the door, she found herself face to face with Abigail March. Miss March lost her self-possession, but Winnifred did not.

"Good morning, Miss March. Did you come to see me?"

Miss March did not deign to reply to this question. "Is Miss Harkins at home? I wish to see her on a business matter."

"Oh, yes," said Winnifred, and she showed her into the sitting-room. "Mr. Atwood is sound asleep but, if you wish, I will wake him up and have him leave the room."

"You can do as you please," said Miss March. "I do not think his presence will interfere with my business with Miss Harkins."

After Miss March's departure, Mandy came into the kitchen and found Winnifred busy polishing some knives with a cork and brick-dust.

"Oh, what do you think!" cried Mandy. "The Ebenzers are going to have a picnic and we're all going."

Martha glanced up with a half frightened look; but Winnifred said decidedly: "I, for one, shall not."

"Oh, yes you will," cried Mandy. "You don't understand. My farm runs by one side of the pond. Our side is high and dry, but the other is low and muddy. There is a fine grove of trees there, and several years before father died, he trimmed it up, built some benches, and all our picnics are held there."

"I don't see how that alters the case," remarked Winnifred.

"But you haven't heard the whole story," cried Mandy. "Father never charged anything for the use of the grove, but it has always been understood that the Harkins family, and its guests, are admitted free of charge, and we will all go — just for the fun of the thing."

"When does it come off?" asked Winnifred.

"In about ten days. The committee consists of Judge Rodgers, Lawyer Barnett, and Miss March; and, of course, it will be a grand success."

"So Mr. Barnett is to be there," thought Winnifred.

"He feels so sure of his money that he is in no hurry to go and get it. I've robbed the mail and now I feel inclined to turn burglar, break open his safe, and obtain that precious document."

While they were at dinner, Eben came, and Winnifred went out upon the piazza to meet him.

"Eben, do you want to earn some money?"

"Who is goin' to pay me?"

"I am," said Winnifred.

"I won't take it. Tell me what you want done, and I'll do it—for love."

Winnifred smiled. "It is very kind of you, Eben. You ought to go on the stage; so many men have told me that they loved me—on the stage. But I cannot consent to let you work for nothing."

"Say, Miss Winnifred, if you'll sit down quiet some day and let me hold your hand for five minutes, I'll lick any man in town for you—Deacon Dalton included."

"Oh, how silly," cried Winnifred. "I don't wish you to frighten anybody, only to use your eyes and tell me what you see. Do this, and I'll pay you in the way you propose; but bear in mind that when I give you my hand, my heart does not go with it. I'm already engaged."

"Lucky dog," said Eben. "Who is he?"

"Mr. Enoch Scales. He's promised me a new toothbrush and a pair of shoes, and says that I may feed the pigs, if I'll marry him, and I'm thinking it over."

"Oh, yer foolin'," cried Eben. "I'd make a better husband than old Scales. But what do you want done?"

"Come out in the orchard and I'll tell you there. I want you to keep an eye—no, you'd better keep both of them—on your employer, Mr. Barnett, and as soon as you find out that he is going away, learn, if you can, where he is going, and at what time he intends to leave Snickersville."

"Whew!" said Eben. "I thought something was up. He's been looking all over his papers and writing lots of letters, and Déacon Dalton was in one day to see him and they chinned for more than an hour. I tried to hear what they were saying, but it was no go."

"Well, you must go now," said Winnifred, "or you'll lose your dinner. Is it a bargain?"

"Yes, five minutes by the watch, and no discount."

Dinner was over, and Winnifred had another long afternoon before her. She would have grown tired of this dull life but for her interest in Martha. The farm-hands, Grandsire Atwood, and Little Davy, had all gone to the hay-field. She decided to follow them, but took the most roundabout course. Once more she passed through the orchard, but instead of following the brook, she turned in the opposite direction. Between two of the hills was a lovely valley, cool and fragrant with the odor of wild flowers. Some of Mandy's cows had found this shady retreat, and they looked at her with their big, placid eyes, as she passed by. She was not afraid of cows, but would not go away from the house until Mandy assured her that the bull had a ring in his nose and was kept tied in a far away pasture which was surrounded by a high rail fence.

As she emerged from the farther end of the valley, her eyes fell upon a broad expanse which the day before had been covered with luxuriant grass and clover. But the glory had departed. It had been cut down by the mowing machine, and the ground looked like a battle-field which had been swept by a terrible storm of shot and shell.

Grandsire Atwood and Stub Dutcher were standing upon the tops of the hay-racks, pitchforks in hand, while Bat Mulvey and Jeff Smith were pitching the hay up to them. Little Davy was running about, full of that delight

which the charms of nature give to children in the widest measure.

Winnifred's first inclination was to join them in the hay-field, but instead she turned away and started homeward in a new direction. She saw the house in the distance, and felt sure she could make her way there.

She was walking along, busy with her thoughts, when suddenly she found herself on the brink of a small elevation. She threw herself backward to avoid falling, but lost her balance, and, before she fully realized what had taken place, had slid down the grass-covered incline.

Feeling that something dreadful was going to happen, she closed her eyes. It is one thing to get into danger, but quite another thing to face it.

"Ugh!"

Winnifred opened her eyes and saw the form of a man, roughly clad, stretched upon the ground, but a few feet from where she sat. She sprang to her feet. The man arose leisurely.

Winnifred was surprised, but not afraid. "Who are you?" she asked.

"I am a victim of circumstances," said the tramp — for such he appeared to be.

"What is your name?"

"Well, ma'am, it isn't Dusty Roads nor Weary Walker, but mine is just as bad — the boys all call me Joe Miggles."

"How long have you been here?" asked Winnifred.

"Jest got in. I walked about fifteen miles to-day and feeling tired, I was taking some balmy sleep, when an angel flew down and woke me up."

Winnifred did not resent the comparison.

"What kind of a place is this?" asked Joe.

"Oh, this is a very moral town. The people are so pious that they are not good — I mean to each other."



WINNIFRED AND JOE MIGGLES



"Are there any pretty girls in town besides yourself?"

"A great many of them," said Winnie, "and many noble men and women, who leaven the lump and make life bearable here."

"Summer boarder?" asked Joe.

"Yes," said Winnie, "because I can't help it. I belonged to a theatrical company which got stranded here, so I decided to remain untill the next season opens. But isn't it funny my telling you all this?"

"Yes," said Joe. "A real lady talking to me jest as though I was a real gentleman. But I used to be one once."

"How did you get into trouble?" asked Winnifred.

"Same old story — a woman was at the bottom of it. When I married her, I had the money and she had the experience; now she's got the money — and you see what I am."

Winnie thought of the certificate. Mr. Barnett had stolen it. Why not try to get it back? "Do you want to make some money?" asked Winnifred.

"Well, yes, jest to look at. I don't need it for anything else."

"If you will do something for me," said Winnie — "find a certain valuable paper that's been lost in this town — I'll give you fifty dollars."

"Got it with you?" asked the man, as he moved towards her.

Winnifred stepped backward quickly, with the first feeling of fear in her heart.

"Don't be afraid, ma'am, but jest as you spoke — I'm walking on my uppers — something hurt my foot."

"Oh, that's all right," said Winnifred. "I thought it was the possibility of my having the money with me —"

"Oh, no, said the man. I've tramped nearly two thousand

miles and I never hurt anything but dogs. I hate dogs, and they don't take to me. I don't know as I blame them, after all, do you?"

Winnifred scrutinized him more closely than she had done. He was a young man, not over thirty, but with long matted hair, and a straggling, unkempt beard. Winnifred thought how very little it would take to make him a very gentlemanly looking person.

Joe moved backward a few steps. "Well, what's the game?" he asked.

Winnifred then told him, briefly, Martha's story.

"And you want me to find the missing marriage certificate? That's all right; but where am I to begin?"

"Why, don't you see?" asked Winnifred. "In telling you the story I've used no names, but when I tell you who I think has got the certificate, you'll know where to begin. When it is found, Martha's good name —" She stopped suddenly, for the man staggered and put one hand over his eyes. As he removed it and straightened up, he said:

"Excuse me, ma'am, but when I hear that name I can't help it. It was my mother's and —"

"Oh, I understand," said Winnifred, sympathetically. "I think the certificate is in the possession of Mr. Barnett, the lawyer. What I want you to do is to get it away from him — how, I do not care. That's your business."

"What's he holding on to it for?" asked Joe.

"It means money to him — how much I do not know. A woman came here from a western state and offered Martha twenty thousand dollars if she would sign away her good name, but she told her that little Davy's birth-right was worth more than money. The woman will probably pay Mr. Barnett much more for the certificate, for it will make her secure in her property."

"Do you know what state the woman came from?" asked Joe.

"Montana."

"And her name?" cried the man.

"Mrs. Harrison Goss."

The man clenched his hands, and for a moment stood rigid. As he relaxed his muscles, he said:

"Keep your money, ma'am. It's no use; I can't earn it. But I'll give you some good advice for nothing. Let him sell her the certificate and get the money. When he comes back, he'll begin to spend it, and then you'll know for sure. I'll stay around here. When he comes back, I'll have a talk with him."

"You!" cried Winnifred.

The man laughed — a hoarse, unnatural laugh, which gave Winnifred a thrill of fear.

"I know a thing or two, and soon I'll know more. You'll be glad you ran across me, ma'am. Some day I may be able to put the certificate, and that twenty thousand dollars, and perhaps more, into the hands of that Martha of yours. Good day, ma'am."

With these words, he turned away, while the astonished Winnifred gazed after him.

On her way homeward, she wondered what he had meant by his strange words. But many a long day was to pass before she would learn.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE "EBENEZER" PICNIC

WINNIFRED had now two important matters on her mind; one was the fate of the certificate, which she felt sure was in Mr. Barnett's possession, and the other was her meeting with Joe Miggles and the possible outcome of that adventure. Concerning neither of these subjects had she spoken to either Martha or Mandy. Theatrical people are used to plots and counterplots, and Winnifred knew by experience that it is dangerous to divulge secret information to others until you feel quite sure of attaining the end you have in view.

She knew if she told Mandy, even with the pledge of secrecy, that Plum Gifford would soon hear of it, and she could not tell then how wide-spread the information would become. As regarded Grandsire Atwood and Martha, she thought it inadvisable to tell them, for it would bring the whole matter up again and might seriously affect Martha, who seemed on the road to complete recovery. The rest which the young girl had been enabled to take, and the pleasant and cheerful associations about her, had aided if they had not caused the improvement. With physical health would come mental equipoise, and Winnifred thought it best not to disturb either one or the other.

She heard daily from Eben Wilkes in regard to Mr. Barnett's movements. He was evidently making preparations for a journey, but being on the committee for the "Ebenezer" picnic, she felt sure that he would not leave town until after that event. So far as Joe Miggles was concerned, all she could do was to wait until he returned, if he ever did, of his own accord.

As the day of the picnic approached, it became the subject of conversation. Mandy was going and so was Plummer Gifford. Eben Wilkes had asked Winnifred to accompany him and she had consented. At first, Grandsire Atwood and Martha had refused to go to the picnic. Winnifred did not feel inclined to push the matter. For herself, she did not care. She knew that she could give as well as take, but poor Martha, with the stigma resting upon her, was in a different position. She must bear all and say nothing. Grandsire Atwood was too old and too infirm to wage a strong battle in his daughter's defence, and she had about come to the conclusion that she would advise Martha and her father to remain at home, when Mandy took a new line of argument.

"What! Not going to the picnic? Well, I don't think I would let the Ebenezers crow over me. As my guests, you have a right to go. They may say sharp things with their tongues, but their words cannot hurt you now any more than they have before this. I don't think they will try to put you off the grounds, and if they do, I think I've got friends enough so that we can hold our own. My father always said that if folks acted as if they were guilty, it made so many more folks believe it. Now, you know you are all right, and the quickest way to prove it is to act up to what you know."

Looked at from Mandy's point of view, her argument was unanswerable, and Winnifred joined her solicitations that Martha, her father, and little Davy should accompany the party.

The time, arrived at last. The month was June, and the day was worthy of all the honors which attach to the name. It was not proposed, nor was it desired, that the attendance on the occasion should be limited to the members of the Ebenezer Moral Reform Society. A small admission

fee to the grounds was charged, and the money thus raised went into the treasury of the society. On such occasions, especially in a country town, personal feelings and local antipathies are apt to be forgotten, and all meet with a common object in view — the having of a good time.

It was a gala day in Snickersville. Captain Milliken closed his store, and came with his wife and family. We have to deal with the fortunes of but few of those present, and not with those of the many, but it should be mentioned that Mr. David Winkle, his wife Sarah, and daughter Sally were there; so were, also, Mr. Amri Struthers and his wife Amelia; Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Witherspoon came with Mrs. Ebenezer Stark. Mr. Stark had too much work on hand to lose a day. The Witherspoon girls, Ri and Tri, had for escorts two young gentlemen from Boston who were summer boarders at the hotel at Lakeside. Jason White was surrounded by a crowd of farmers to whom he was descanting upon the size and breed of his pigs, while his wife Hannah, who was as thoroughly conversant with the matter as he was himself, was pouring similar information into the ears of old Caleb Leeds. Mr. Mudge, the orator, Mr. Donaldson the editor, Dr. Danby and his son Paul, and Miss Rhodes the school-teacher, were late but prominent arrivals. The Rev. Franklin Merrill, Deacon Solomon Dalton, Deacon Isaac Sprowle, and Miss Abigail March occupied what might be called seats of honor. Judge Rodgers and Lawyer Barnett arrived, arm in arm. In one crowd were Mr. Riccadonna, Stub Dutcher, Bat Mulvey, Jake Clemson, and Jefferson Smith. When Mandy reached the grove with her party, they were greeted by Tom Appleby and Enoch Scales, the latter declaring that the picnic promised to be such a big success that it would take the starch all out of Fourth of July.

Although the company was large, the grove itself was much larger in comparison. Those present soon gathered in little groups, each having its particular line of amusement in view. Plum Gifford had hired a boat, for Mandy was very fond of rowing. Eben and Winnifred were asked to accompany the party. Little Davy wished to go too, so he was taken along. Grandsire Atwood met an old and sensible friend, and they sat down to talk of the long ago. Martha, with her acquired reticence, had sought a secluded place where she thought she was free from observation and intrusion, but Mr. Enoch Scales caught sight of her and soon joined her.

"How do yer do, Marthy? Don't disturb yourself."

"Do you wish to see father, Enoch? I don't know where he has gone."

"Well, no, I guess you'll do, Marthy," and he took a seat beside her. "I s'pose yer've heerd Sister Tildy's sick, ain't yer?"

"Yes; is she no better?"

"No. Doctor Danby says she'll probably linger along, mebbe for years. Just my luck! Yer see, I went into the pig business, and I've got more'n a hundred pigs comin' on. Now, she's took sick and I've managed to git along pretty well so far, but what in tarnation I'm goin' to do now, I don't know."

"It makes it hard for you," said Martha, sympathetically.

"Y-a-as. How can I ever take care o' the pigs, tend to Tildy, do the housework, drive the mail, feed the stock, chop up wood, do the milkin,' and then there's the taters to dig, and ten acres of corn to get in and husk, besides bein' constable? The only thing I can do, Marthy, is to git married, and I was thinkin' what a good openin' it would be for a young woman over to my place."

"Yes, it is a splendid opening for somebody, Enoch."

"I'm glad you think so. Oh, my wife will have everything. I'm goin' to have a carpet in the parlor sometime and an album for picters. I've got quite a lot of picters. Cousin Jim sent me photygraphs of all his young ones — seventeen of 'em. Yer know Elder Shipley that used to preach here? Well, I got a picter o' him, and he give me one o' his Aunt Mary. I never seed her, but she's a good, stout lookin' woman. Tildy and I has been talkin' and we've about made up our minds to change from taller candles and burn kerosene. I don't think much about the change myself, but Tildy, she's got quite high notions."

"A little extravagant, isn't she?" said Martha.

"I think so. Now, Marthy, if you want that chance over there, you can have it, and Elder Merrill can splice us up as soon as yer say the word. There's a good pair of Tildy's shoes, if she's goin' to be bedrid, that you can have the very day we're married and put 'em right on."

There was a sad look on Martha's face as she said: "I am much obliged, Enoch, for your offer, but I shall never marry again."

"Well, of course, I've told yer just how it is. You know what yer throwin' away. No harm done."

"Oh, no, I hope not," cried Martha.

Enoch was not disposed to take no for an answer. He thought he saw signs of weakening in the sad face which looked up into his.

"Yer won't have to bile soap nor split wood. I wouldn't have my wife do that — I do all that myself."

"No, Enoch, what I have said is final. I shall never marry again."

As Enoch walked away, he muttered to himself: "What a foolish girl! I guess I made a mistake by speakin' too soon. Come to think of it, it's only a little while ago that she heerd that her husband was dead."

Grandsire Atwood was still engaged in conversation when Lawyer Barnett approached him: "How are you to-day, Mr. Atwood? I am glad to see you here. Did your daughter come with you?"

The old gentleman was so surprised at being addressed by the lawyer, and particularly in such polite language and in such a pleasant manner that, for a moment, he was at a loss for words.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Barnett, she's here. No, I don't mean she's here, but she's somewheres 'round here, I don't know just where."

"Well," said the lawyer, "I am going to walk around the grounds and perhaps I shall meet her."

Grandsire Atwood arose from his seat, trembling: "Mr. Barnett, why do you wish to see Marthy? Nothing wrong, I hope."

"Oh, no," said the lawyer, "nothing at all. On such days as these, old friends should be good friends, and I thought I would like to see her and have a little talk with her."

The old gentleman sat down, feeling somewhat reassured, but not wholly, and Mr. Barnett walked away in search of the young girl. It was not long before he espied her. Almost at the same moment she saw him. She started from her seat and came forward.

"Ah, Martha, glad to see you. I was just asking your father where you were."

"Oh, yes, yes," said Martha. "I was going to find him. Will you please tell me where he is?"

"Yes, but wait a moment. I have something to say to you, Martha."

"Martha started back: "To me?" she cried. "What can you have to say to me?"

Mr. Barnett did not choose to answer her question just

at that moment : " See, Martha, how beautiful the glints of sunshine through the leaves silver the ripples of the brook."

" Oh, yes."

" And the brook laughs. Do you hear it, Martha? This is a world of sunshine and joy."

" To some, not to me, Mr. Barnett."

" And why should it not be to you, Martha?"

" Happiness will not come at one's bidding. Oh, how I wish it would."

Mr. Barnett came nearer to her and would have taken her hand, but she drew back : " The battle is hard when fought alone. You need a friend — one you can trust — one who believes in you."

" I have my father and Davy. They believe in me."

Mr. Barnett felt that the time had now come to disclose the true state of his feelings : " And I, too, believe in you, Martha, and I have all along, or rather, since some important information came into my possession in a professional way. I know now that any honest man should be proud to call you wife."

" Oh, sir," cried Martha, " have you found my certificate? You would not speak this way to me unless you had. How could you?"

Mr. Barnett was glad that he was not obliged to make a direct answer : " It doesn't require a marriage certificate to make me believe in you, Martha. You have always declared that you were legally married to David Dalton, and I am sure that you spoke the truth. The reason that I have spoken as I have is because I love you. I would make you my wife. I am honored and respected in this town, and I will demand the same respect for you when we are married."

" You love me?" asked Martha, and there was a deep significance in her voice.

"I have long loved you," said he, "but refrained from speaking, fearing that I was indifferent to you. Besides, circumstances—"

Martha interrupted him: "I was about to say that it is difficult for me to make your present avowal accord with your past actions. Your reference to circumstances shows that you have not forgotten our past relations."

Mr. Barnett felt that matters were growing worse: "I tried to school myself to indifference, but I can do so no longer."

"Squire Barnett, I can never be your wife. I do not love you."

Mr. Barnett was a lawyer and naturally inclined to be persistent: "But, Martha, you might in time, if I succeeded in dispelling the clouds which have hovered over your life."

Martha could stand the mental strain no longer: "No, no, Mr. Barnett! It can never be! I cannot be your wife. I know they say my husband is dead, but I see him often in my dreams, and I don't believe it. I feel—I know that he will come back some day to me and little Davy."

"Often sees her husband," said Mr. Barnett to himself. "She must be crazy again." He turned to the young girl: "Martha, I hope that you will take time to think of this. I assure you that my future happiness—" He was about to say, "prosperity," but refrained—"depends upon your becoming my wife. After you think it over, as I hope you will, you may give me a different answer."

"Oh, no! No!!" she cried. "I must go to my father," and she moved swiftly away.

Winnifred and Mandy came back from their boat trip, having enjoyed it greatly. It was a new experience for Winnifred and she declared that a Pullman Palace Car

could not be compared, as regarded ease and comfort, with a rowboat. As she stepped ashore, the Rev. Mr. Merrill came forward to meet her and, ignoring the presence and black looks of Mr. Eben Wilkes, walked by her side to the grove.

Miss Abigail March was busily engaged arranging one of the tables for lunch, but her keen eyes took in the situation :

"Just look at that! Our minister walkin' and talkin' to that play-actress!"

She turned to Miss Bentwood, a prim looking lady of about her own age, and remarked : "It's allers strange to me how some folks is brazen enough to keep puttin' themselves in where they ain't wanted. The Ebenezer Society calkerlates to be a little pertic'ler as to who they invite and who they don't."

Miss Bentwood nodded her approval of Miss March's sentiments.

"But when every strange Tom, Dick, and Harry, especially actors and actresses, tries to boost themselves forward into the company of decent people —"

"It's shameful!" said Miss Bentwood.

"Yes, I think it's about time that decent people should put their foot down and tell the actors and actresses they'd better go about their business."

If Miss March and her friend Miss Bentwood could have overheard the conversation between the Rev. Franklin Merrill and Miss Winnifred Winton, their remarks would, without doubt, have been much more energetic than they were.

"I didn't know that you intended to remain in Snickersville, Miss Winton."

"What! Did you think that I would leave town just because you closed our show up? That's the reason I could not."

The Rev. Mr. Merrill was somewhat embarrassed: "Well, I a —"

"Oh, you needn't try to apologize, Mr. Merrill. You know you helped, don't you?"

"Well, to be candid, Miss Winton, from representations made to me —"

"Oh, I suppose it was what Deacon Dalton and Miss March told you. Do you think, with their narrow mindedness, they are competent to judge of anything of the kind? The show was all right — proper enough in every town but Snickersville. Why didn't you come for yourself and see?"

"Well, really, that would hardly have done — here."

Winnifred determined to change the line of conversation: "Are you going to stay in this little town all your life, Mr. Merrill?"

"No. I will tell you, although I must ask you, for obvious reasons, to keep it a secret, at least for the present, that I have accepted a call to a church in a city some distance from here, and shall leave sometime in the fall."

Winnifred laughed: "Oh, I will keep your secret. I should think you would want to leave to-night, but, as for me, not being a minister, I am having a good time."

"Do you think a minister's enjoyments are limited?" he asked.

Winnifred shook her head: "Oh, I really don't know. I suppose the ministers are all right, but they have such terrible people to deal with. I should think that your work would be much the same as handling a drove of unruly cattle."

"Oh, you think clergymen are like cow-boys, do you?" asked Mr. Merrill, sarcastically.

"Please let us drop that subject," said Winnifred. "I don't wish to quarrel with you, and I might if we argued upon a subject about which I know so little."

Mr. Merrill was willing to comply with Winnifred's wish: "What has become of the other members of your company?" he asked.

"Oh," said Winnifred, "they managed to raise some money to pay their fares home, and I borrowed some to square my board for a while."

"Are you going to leave us soon?" he asked.

"Not until I have accomplished what I remained here for."

"And that?"

"I shall stay until Grandsire Atwood's house is fixed up and they are all comfortably settled. Then I have another object in view — to clear from Martha Atwood's good name the stigma which the members of your church and the Ebenezer Moral Reform Society have placed upon a poor defenceless girl."

"You seem to have taken the Atwood family under your special charge."

"Yes," said Winnifred, "and I mean to see them through. By the way, Mr. Merrill, allow me to thank you for that entertainment. I enjoyed every minute of it."

Mr. Merrill looked surprised: "What entertainment was that, Miss Winton? I don't remember."

"Oh," said Winnifred, "I mean the scene in the court room when that old lady — she's some relation to Deacon Dalton, I believe — gave her testimony. I was delighted when she imitated my song and dance. Don't you think the whole affair was very funny?"

Mr. Merrill looked serious: "I think the whole performance quite ridiculous and entirely unnecessary. The zeal manifested by some people is hardly creditable to their discretion."

"Oh, I enjoyed it immensely," cried Winnifred. "And that Deacon Dalton — don't you think he is a humbug?"

Really, now, don't you?" and she looked up archly at him.

The Rev. Mr. Merrill thought that the conversation was getting beyond proper bounds for him, at least. "I hope not," he replied; "I give him credit for being a man who acts strictly up to his convictions. Seriously, Miss Winton, you should not judge all our people by certain ones whom you have met. There are some most estimable persons in this town."

As Martha approached her father, she found him engaged in conversation with Deacon Dalton. Seeing that she was unobserved by them, she stepped back, but overheard the conversation which followed.

"I hear yer havin' yer house fixed up, Mr. Atwood," said Deacon Dalton.

"No thanks to you, Solomon."

"No, a charity affair," said the Deacon.

"Charity! Well, if a good woman sees fit to help me, as I'm old, I'll not say her nay."

"Good woman!" cried the Deacon. "A lost cretur' that shows her brazenness for money."

Grandsire Atwood grew angry: "A woman whose finger-tip is worth more to the world than your whole mizzable carcass!"

"Yer ought to be ashamed of yerself, Timothy, to have such a temper. But I know what must be the soul sickness of a man with a lost and unrepentant daughter."

Grandsire Atwood was overcome with passion and he trembled with excitement:

"You scoundrel!" he cried.

Martha rushed forward and grasped her father's arm: "Oh, come, father, come away with me. We're not wanted here."

"Who says we're not wanted?" cried the old gentle-

man. "Ain't she good enough for such as you?" he shouted turning again to the Deacon.

The Deacon was frightened by the old man's vehemence, so he replied, half apologetically: "There's some here that object."

Grandsire Atwood raised his right arm: "Well, then, my curse on 'em! We will go, Martha, my girl. But hear me, Solomon Dalton, the day will come when her name will be writ as white as snow and yours as black as the devil!"

Before Martha retired that night, she went to Winnifred's room and told her of the two offers of marriage she had had during that day.

"Don't mind what Enoch Scales said, Martha," said Winnifred. "The poor man really needs a wife, and I suppose he will keep on proposing until he finds the right one. The next time I see him, I am going to tell him to try Miss Abigail March. But I cannot understand, Martha, why Mr. Barnett should make you a declaration of love. My advice is to forget all about it. I don't think he will trouble you any more."

But that night Winnifred lay awake for hours. Mr. Barnett's proposal of marriage had given her a new idea, although she had not thought it best to mention it to her friend. She tried to reason the matter out on a theatrical basis.

"Now," said she to herself, "what would such a proposal mean in a play, supposing the plot and the people in the play were the same as I have met in this town? Mrs. Goss is an adventuress. Mr. Barnett is the villain; poor Martha is the intended victim. The villain has the marriage certificate in his possession and can sell it to the adventuress for a certain sum of money, but the villain knows that Martha is rightfully married and the legal heir

to the property left by her husband ; so, if the villain can induce the intended victim to marry him, after the ceremony, he will produce the marriage certificate and, by legal means, force the adventuress to disgorge the property which she now holds illegally.

"Oh, Martha, you were not a good actress to-day. If I had been in your place, and had your opportunity, I would have told Mr. Barnett that I would marry him if he would prove the legality of my first marriage. That would have forced him to show his hand and, knowing that the certificate, by his own confession, was in his possession, I would have at once gone to Judge Rodgers and taken the proper means to force him to give it up.

"What part am I to act in this life drama? It may be that I shall become Martha's good angel and vindicate her name before the world. I hope so," and with this pleasant thought in mind, she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXVI

FOURTH OF JULY

FOURTH OF JULY in the country! What remembrances these words bring back to those born and bred in rural surroundings! The procession of small boys in the morning, with paper caps, fish horns, and other instruments of torture; the ringing of bells, the Star Spangled Banner floating over the school-houses and the town hall; the reading of the Declaration of Independence, and the oration by the local Webster; the dinner of spring lamb, green peas and strawberries at noon; the picnic in the afternoon, with boating on the pond or river; the fireworks at night; and, added to all these attractions, the unlimited quantities of candy, peanuts, pop-corn, cookies, and ginger-pop, not omitting the almost constant fusilade of torpedoes and fire-crackers, disposed of during the day. Surely the shade of John Adams, who wrote a prescription for the proper observance of the Fourth of July, could but be pleased with the contemplation of that holiday in the country.

Winnifred was sitting in a shady corner of the piazza, which she had pre-empted, busily engaged with her embroidery. She was thinking of the lost certificate and of Joe Miggles, and wondering what connection, if any, there could be between the two.

"Miss Winton!"

Winnifred looked up and found Mandy standing before her with a copy of the *White Mountain Sun* in her hand.

"Do you know that the Fourth of July is only a week from to-morrow?" asked Mandy.

"I had not thought of it," Winnifred replied. "I suppose it will be a day very much like the Ebenezer's picnic."

"Yes," said Mandy, "only more so. Nearly everybody comes down to our grove. But what I came out here for was to read you what's in the paper.

"The Glorious Fourth will be celebrated in good style in this town. Deacon Sprowle will burn an empty tar barrel that he has been keeping for the past six months. Tom Wilkins is coming over from Willoughby and will bring his bugle, and if we can borrow a drum, some of the boys will march through Main Street about four o'clock in the morning, wearing paper caps, and yelling and acting like sixty."

"I think my literary friend, Mr. Fogg, must have written that," said Winnifred.

"I think he is very funny," said Mandy. "Since he began writing for the paper they say they sell twice as many copies. Why, I heard that they print more than two hundred every week."

Mandy returned to her housework and Winnifred's thoughts were diverted to Mr. Hosea Fogg. He had called upon her several times and had referred to his great desire to secure a position on some New York paper. She had volunteered to write to an editor in that city with whom she was acquainted, and Mr. Fogg was delighted with the reply which he had received. It was to the effect that if Mr. Fogg would write and print in his paper something so far out of the ordinary that it would create a great sensation in the town in which he lived, and would bring a copy of the paper with him to New York, he might possibly find an opening for him.

While she sat at dinner, Winnifred had a visitor. It was Eben Wilkins. He stood at the foot of the steps and beckoned to her. She followed him into the orchard.

"I got some news for yer, Miss Winnifred — something very important, too. Mr. Barnett is going away on the night train."

"Where to?" asked Winnifred, eagerly.

"Oh, I can only guess. He sent another letter to that Mrs. Goss out in Montana last night, and I guess we're pretty sure in reckonin' that that's where he's bound."

He had moved about uneasily during the short conversation.

"The news is not very pleasant, Eben, but I am very glad to get it, and am greatly obliged to you."

Eben looked at her with a curious twinkle in his eye: "Do I get my pay now? I guess you forgot all about it."

"Oh, no, but I was so busy thinking about the possibilities of Mr. Barnett's trip to the West — but, really, Eben, I had to leave my dinner to come out here and if I wait five minutes longer, it will be cold."

"If I wait, do I get interest?"

"Really, I can't afford to add so greatly to my indebtedness. Come," and she held out her hand. "We will walk down to the end of the orchard and back again. We will go slowly and it will surely take five minutes."

"I don't think I shall like that near so well as I should sittin' down."

"Was that in the bond?" asked Winnifred. "Was it specified in our agreement that we should sit down?"

"No, I s'pose not," said Eben, ruefully. "You've got the goods and I s'pose I've got to take my pay just the way you say. Well, come along."

When Winnifred returned to the house, she found that the thoughtful Mandy had put her dinner in the oven to keep it warm, but she had little inclination to finish the meal. The blow had fallen. The worst had come to pass. Mr. Barnett would give the certificate to Mrs. Goss, and she would destroy it immediately. With that, Martha's last chance of vindication was gone. There was no hope left, except the vague declaration of Joe Miggles; but what could he do? No, the case was hopeless.

A week passed away. After fretting over the situation of affairs for a day, Winnifred decided to take the matter philosophically. Worry would do no good. She had done her best and now she must depend upon a kind Providence to right the wrong.

Fourth of July came on Thursday. The day preceding, about ten o'clock, Mr. Hosea Fogg paid her a visit.

"I have a copy of *The Sun* in my pocket," he said, "but I am not going to show it to you."

"Why not?"

"Because it contains the article which I hope is to make my fortune in New York. I am going over to Willoughby to take the down train at noon, and shall be in your great city by to-morrow morning, prepared to meet my fate as soon as I can find the editor."

"Do you think your article will create a sensation in Snickersville?"

"I am sure it will — one that will be heard in New York. I have told Ted Barry, our pressman, who delivers the papers, not to take them around until late this afternoon. Our press broke down, you know," he added, with a laugh.

"I judge from your remarks," said Winnifred, "that you wish to be well away from Snickersville before the paper is read. I am sorry to be deprived of the opportunity of reading it this afternoon. I always enjoy it so much, especially what you write."

"Ah, thank, Miss Winton. If I secure a position in New York, I will see that every paper containing articles from my pen reaches you in your present seclusion."

"Well, good-bye," said Winnifred, giving him her hand; "I wish you success. You have been a good friend to me, and I always enjoy the success of my friends."

"Good-bye, Miss Winton. I am sure you will enjoy reading *The Sun* this evening."

There was a brisk shower early Thursday morning. Mr. Struthers said he was glad of it, for it laid the dust. The morning was passed in the good, old-fashioned way, the principal events of which have already been dwelt upon. In the afternoon, all Snickersville found its way to Harkins' grove, and if any fear had been entertained that the "Ebenezer" picnic would eclipse the Fourth of July celebration, it was soon dispelled. Never had Snickersville seen such a concourse of people. They came from all directions.

"Quite a turnout," said Mandy, as they arrived at the grove. "I wonder what started them up so."

Winnifred thought it best not to give what she considered the real reason, but she felt sure that Mr. Fogg's sensational article, which she had read the evening previous, was undoubtedly the cause of the large assemblage.

"I never saw nothing like it," said Mandy, "and I've never missed a Fourth of July celebration since I was a young one."

"I saw in the paper," said Winnifred, "that Mr. J. Austin Donaldson, the editor of *The Sun*, who has been away for a fortnight on business, was to return home last night in order to be present at the celebration to-day. An editor is usually a very popular man, and probably that's the reason so many people are here," — but she laughed to herself when she said it.

There were many new faces which had not been seen at the "Ebenezer" picnic. There was Uncle Joe Swazey, with his boots well greased, wearing the blue suit he was married in fifty years ago. Poor Liddy, his wife, had long been lying on the hillside, her memory grown dim to Uncle Joe, and now he was frisking around as lively as a colt and goo-gooing the Widow Smith with his watery eyes. She, being cross-eyed, could not respond very well, but did

the best she could, a proceeding which did not escape the eagle optics of Mrs. Meacham, who whispered to her sister-in-law, that "they was two old fools, and that she should think poor Liddy would turn over in her grave."

There were Deacon Dalton and Cy Prouty scowling and looking fierce. They hadn't spoken to each other since they traded oxen five years before and both were cheated.

There was Josiah Dodge trying to smoke a cigar before his girl to show off. He felt as if three more draws would kill him, but hung on hoping that something would turn up, and it did, and he did not reappear for an hour.

The star of the occasion appeared to be Miss Peasley's new hired man. He sported a green bordered red necktie, and had his hair plastered down to his eyebrows. When he spoke, all the girls laughed. He told everybody there was nothing small about him but his feet. If he knew another joke he didn't mention it, as that one seemed to go all right. He did not make much of a hit with the boys, however.

Paul Danby, Winnifred acknowledged to herself, was the best dressed and most genteel looking young man in the company. He was escorting Miss Betsy Sprowle, who had been down to Concord to have a dress made for the occasion, and, while there, had bought a picture hat, which was the envy of all her friends and provoked sharp criticisms from her enemies.

Miss Selina Putney sat under a tree looking as sour as vinegar because no one had praised the jelly cake which she had contributed for the occasion.

Quite a stir of excitement was caused by the advent of two young men from the city, who were summer boarders at the Lakeside House. Tom Appleby overheard one of them say: "Well, well, Cholly, ain't this great? Did you evah see such a drove of yawps?" Tom told Plum Gif-

ford and Eben Wilkes what he had overheard, and the young man's remarks were soon passed from mouth to mouth. Tom led the attack, and before the city visitors fully comprehended the situation, they were seized and carried bodily through the jeering crowd to the edge of the pond, into which they were thrown. When they emerged, dripping from the pond, they were politely informed that their room was better than their company, and, taking the hint, they rode away with an even poorer opinion of the "yawps" than they had at first entertained.

This event, exciting as it was, was soon followed by one of a much more humorous nature. Mrs. Betsey Tinkham had come to the celebration bringing her six months old baby boy and her daughter, aged five. The little girl got lost in the crowd. The mother found the search for her impeded by the fact that the baby was heavy and, besides, was screaming at the top of his voice. Meeting Eben Wilkes, she said :

"Oh, Mr. Wilkes, how glad I am to see you. Elizabeth is lost somewhere and I can't find her. Will you be so good as to hold the baby? I won't be gone but a few minutes."

Before Eben could refuse, Mrs. Tinkham had placed the child in his arms and had disappeared in the crowd. Eben had probably never held a baby before, and he was not used to anything with such a limber neck. As fast as he could stick its head up, it would fall over. Finally, the baby's forehead came down on his nose with such force that it made him mad — and so it did the baby. Its lip puckered up until it looked like a palm-leaf fan. It gave a yell, then held its breath until its face gradually assumed the color of a cranberry pie. Then followed a series of screams and squirms. In less than two minutes, the baby kicked off its shoes; then it jammed its fist in Eben's



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eye, pulled off his collar, and scratched the outline of a town map on his cheek. The mother came rushing up just then and snatched the infant from him.

"What have you been doing to my baby?" she cried. "I don't see how all you folks could stand around and see a brute of a man abuse a little child like that."

For a moment, Eben felt as though he really were a criminal. He could have stood the affair much better had he not, on looking around, seen Miss Winton, who was unable to repress a smile. He jammed his hat down over his eyes and walked away, taking an inward oath that nobody would ever play the baby trick on him again.

Enoch Scales had been enjoying himself immensely.

"How do you feel, Enoch?" asked Plum Gifford, as he passed him.

"Oh, I feel bunkum. I wish Tildy could a come. I wish I'd a brought my violin. We might a had a dance."

At that moment, a strong hand clutched his shoulder, causing him to wince, and, turning, he saw Mr. Abijah Reed, who was known throughout the town as a man possessing a most violent temper.

"Say, Scales, have yer seen anything of Donaldson? The paper said he was comin' home last night and was goin' to be here to-day. I'm lookin' for him, and when I find him, there will be some fun."

"What's he been doin' to you?" asked Enoch.

"He hasn't been doin' nothing to me," said Mr. Reed, "but he has outraged my feelings and those of my family. Haven't yer seen the paper?"

"No," said Enoch, "I thought I would put it off until to-morrow. Tildy's got it. It's all the celebration she'll git."

Mr. Reed drew a copy of *The Sun* from his pocket.

"What do you think of that, Enoch?" and he pointed

to an item in a column, at the head of which appeared in large black letters :

PLANTED

CONDUCTED BY J. AUSTIN DONALDSON

Died, June 9, Mary Ellen Reed, Aged 27 years.

A daisy girl was Mary Reed,
She's on the other shore,
The pig and hens she used to feed
Will never see her more.
We know her father very well,
And grieve to see him thus,
We traded horses with him twice
And that's enough for us.

"Well, Mr. Reed," said Enoch, "if he writ anything like that about Tildy, his bitterary notice would appear in the next paper."

Mr. Reed shook a heavy walking-stick, almost a club, which he carried, and started off in search of Mr. Donaldson.

A pleasant-voiced, young country girl, whose reddened eyes showed that she had been weeping, was talking to Judge Rodgers.

"What can I do to him?" she cried. "Just to think of his printing anything like that about father. Why, only a little while before poor father died, he told me that he loved me and asked father's consent to our marriage."

"Well, Miss Susie," said Mr. Rodgers, "there are two ways in which you can proceed against him. You can sue him for damages—I should call it libel—and then, if he doesn't keep his word to marry you, you can bring suit against him for breach of promise."

"Why," cried the girl, "I wouldn't marry him if he was the last man left in the world. Just to think that

after coming to see me twice a week, as he used to do, that he could put such a thing in his paper as this."

Passed on, June 15, of liver complaint, Erastus P. Short,

Aged 44 years.

Over the river, over the river,

Erastus has gone in a skiff,

His wind was shut off by a kalsomined liver,

His lights they went out with a gurgle and shiver.

His wife has the farm, it was all he could give her,

Before he keeled up as a stiff.

Judge Rodgers felt a hand upon his arm: "Is Mr. Barnett here to-day, Judge Rodgers?"

"I think not, Miss Peasley. I heard that he had gone away for a little trip. But you seem very much excited."

"Well, I have good reason to be," said Miss Tabitha Peasley. "Just to think of that miserable scoundrel putting such a thing in his paper about my dear brother Ichabod's wife! He's been stopping with us and owes us several months' board. Did you see what he put in the paper?"

"Oh, yes," said the Judge, "I read it last night. I don't think it strange that Mr. Donaldson has not put in an appearance to-day."

"I wouldn't have cared," said Miss Tabitha, "if there had been any truth in it, but you knew my brother's wife, and you know Abigail was a very quiet woman. It is lucky for that miserable creature that my brother is laid up with the rheumatism."

The item which had caused Miss Tabitha Peasley's indignation read as follows:

June 22, Abigail, wife of Ichabod Peasley, Aged 69.

Abigail talked from the day of her birth,

She talked three husbands off the earth,

Her wagging tongue was calloused.

She weighed 800 hundred pounds or more,

The ferryman sailed for the golden shore,

And took her along for ballast.

It was Enoch's turn next. As a heavily built, stolid looking young country fellow approached him, he cried out: "Hullo, Simon! You look mad enough to swallow a nail keg."

"Well, I feel about that way," said Simon Strong. "I'm looking for that fellow Donaldson that runs the newspaper. When I find him, he will think a whole hog-head of nails has dropped on him."

"Why, what's he been doin'?" asked Enoch. He began to feel that his failure to read the newspaper had deprived him of lots of fun which he might have had.

"Well, to think of his writing such a thing," said Simon, "when father was so good to him. Why, he lent him five hundred dollars to start his paper with, and we have got his note now, and he's never paid anything on it, and no interest nuther, but I'll have it out of his hide when I get hold of him."

"Suthin in the paper?" asked Enoch.

"Why, haven't you read it?" cried Simon. "I see Judge Rodgers over there and I'm going to ask him if I wouldn't be justified in killing that editor at sight."

"What was it he writ?" asked Enoch. "Got the paper with yer?"

"Yes, here it is," and Enoch read:

Left his earthly home, June 8, Jonathan Strong, Aged 80.

Five good wives had Jonathan Strong,

'Twas a wonder to all he lasted so long.

As soon as one was laid aside,

He humped around for another bride.

Oh, bury him deep, with joyful song,

Sound the tymbal, beat the gong,

It's a wonder to all he lasted so long—

Gone to meet brother Brigham.

"Who are you lookin' for, Chester?" asked Tom Appleby, as a young man approached him.

"Do you see that?" asked Chester, as he drew a revolver from his pocket.

"Yes," said Tom, "just point it the other way, please. Have you been celebratin'?"

"No, but I'm going to," said Chester, "as soon as I find the editor of the *Sun*."

"I haven't seen him," said Tom. "Don't think he's 'round to-day. I saw in the paper last night, though, that he was expected here."

"Well, I hope he'll come. I have an account to settle with him. Did you read the obituary notices?"

"No," said Tom, "I only look at the marriages with the hope of finding my own there some day, but I haven't yet. How's your folks, all right?"

"Why, haven't yer heard?" asked Chester. "My sister Sophie died last week, and that's what I want to see Donaldson about."

"Why," said Tom, astonished, "what did he have to do with it?"

"Nothing," said Chester, "but if she had been alive and had read what he put in the paper, it would have killed her, sure, so I look on him as her murderer. Just read that," and he handed a paper to Tom.

June 27, of whooping-cough, Sophia Adelaide Dusenberry,
Aged 47.

There was never a maid on land or sea,
That wanted a husband so bad as she,
And she struggled hard to git there.
But whooping-cough got in its licks,
And whooped her over the river Styx,
Where she found a throne of golden bricks,
And all alone she'll sit there.

"Well, when you find him, Chess, I'd fill him as full of holes as a skimmer, and if I am on the jury, I'll call it justifiable homicide."

Eben, after his adventure with the baby, bought a saucer of ice cream in order to cool his heated feelings. Miss Sally Winkle, who had been looking in vain for a permanent escort, approached him :

"Are you enjoying your ice cream, Eben?"

"Oh, yes," said Eben, "it's lickin' good, Sally. Don't you wish you had some? Come sit down here and I'll give you half," and, despite his previous sorrows, Eben was made happy for the remainder of the day.

Winnifred had been an amused observer of the various events which had taken place. She had read *The Sun* the evening before, and felt sure that Mr. Fogg's article would create a sensation in Snickersville. There was a little glade at one end of the grove which formed a most inviting retreat. It was secluded to a certain extent, but a good view of the grounds could be obtained from it. She had taken Grandsire Atwood, Martha, and little Davy there with her, for she wished to avoid, if possible, a recurrence of the meeting between them and Deacon Dalton or Miss March. She opened a little hand-bag which she had brought with her and took out a pack of cards.

"Martha, let me tell your fortune," she said.

Martha shook her head : "If I believed in such things, I wouldn't dare to hear my fortune."

Winnifred paid no attention to her objection : "Blue eyes — please cut the cards."

As Martha cut the cards, she asked : "Do you really believe in it, Miss Winnifred?"

"Why, of course I do," cried Winnifred, as she dealt out the cards on the flat rock upon which she was seated. "Why, you have a splendid fortune. Look here — you are very anxious about a certain paper. Now, isn't that strange how the cards can tell such things?"

"Why, Miss Winnifred," cried Martha, "you know that yourself, already."

‘Perhaps, but the cards say the paper will be found and that you will have it soon.’

‘Ah!’ said Martha, ‘if I could but believe it.’

‘You must pray that it will come true, Martha.’

‘I will! I will!! I do so every night.’

Looking up, Winnifred saw Miss March regarding her. She arose and went forward to meet her, prompted by an impulse which she could not have explained. She disliked the woman intensely, but determined to make friends with her in some way. Perhaps the cards would help her. Shuffling them, she said:

‘How do you do, Miss March? I am playing gypsy to-day. Let me tell your fortune.’

Miss March shook her head vigorously. ‘Cards, eh! Cards! Beelzebub’s tickets to perdition! I wonder Mandy allows them on the place.’ Then she added, sarcastically: ‘But city boarders are allowed to do as they please.’

Winnifred persisted: ‘I can read your fortune like an open book. Let me see — your eyes are gray.’

Miss March closed her eyes: ‘I won’t have it! I’ll have no dealings with Satan. You and Satan shan’t see my eyes.’

‘Come, let us sit down under this tree,’ said Winnifred. ‘There is a blonde young man who thinks of you by day and dreams of you by night.’

As Miss Abigail sat down, she exclaimed: ‘Heh! What’s that?’

‘But he is very modest and dare not tell his love.’

‘He dassant? Heh!’ said Abigail.

Winnifred felt that she had secured an advantage and proposed to make the most of it: ‘There’s a dark woman who is jealous of you.’

‘Heh!’

"She has found out the young man loves you."

Miss Abigail became deeply interested : "Who is she ? What does she look like ?"

"I cannot tell any more until you cut the cards."

"Want me to cut 'em ? Lucky I brought my reticule with me," and she took out a pair of scissors. "How many shall I cut ?" Grasping a card from Winnifred's hand, she cut it in two. "Any more ?"

"No, that will do," said Winnifred.

"Now, who's the young man ?" Abigail demanded.

"He is a very nice person and very good looking," said Winnifred, slowly, pausing after each word in order to produce the most profound effect upon her listener.

"What's his name ?" asked Abigail, eagerly.

"Oh, the cards can't tell names," said Winnifred. "He is represented by this," and she passed Abigail a Jack of Diamonds.

Abigail took her spectacles from her reticule and regarded the card attentively. "Well, I think he looks something like Elder Merrill."

Winnifred could not help smiling. "As I live," she exclaimed, "he is the very one. How strange !"

Abigail reflected for a while and then looked up with a serious expression on her face : "Why, now do you know, miss, I've caught the minister lookin' at me several times in a queer sort of a way."

Winnifred cast a quick glance behind her and saw that Grandsire Atwood, Martha, and little Davy had left the glade. "And you never suspected that he admired you, Miss March ?"

"Just as true as I am sittin' here this minute, sech a thing never crossed my mind." Then she giggled and put the card in her reticule. "Tell me some more. Shall I cut any more cards ?"

"No," said Winnifred, "that is all the cards will tell. But it is plain enough now. And you say you never encouraged him?"

"No, I never thought of it. I had no idee about his feelings. I ain't one of the kind that's lookin' for a husband, but," and she looked at the card again, "yes, that's Frank Merrill. His mouth and chin is perfect and the same little wrinkle in his forrid, and here I've been and never thought of sech a thing. But who's the jealous woman?"

"This card," said Winnifred, "is the jealous woman," and she passed Abigail the Queen of Clubs.

"True as I live," cried Abigail, "it's Patience Danks, the dressmaker. Well, now, the sly, artful hussy! I wouldn't have believed a word of it, but the picters — my soul! Any one can see it's true. Perhaps I've mistook yer, young woman. I kinder thought that you was after the Elder yourself."

Winnifred lifted her eyebrows: "Why, how you were deceived, Miss March."

"Yes, so I was. Well! Well!!!"

"Elder Merrill is so bashful, now that you know how things are, I think that you ought to encourage him."

Abigail nodded her head vigorously: "I will! I will!!" She seemed wrapt up in the new thoughts which had come to her — so pleasing to a woman — the knowledge that a man is in love with her.

Winnifred glanced towards the opening of the glade and saw Deacon Dalton. He was looking directly at her. She shuffled the cards in such a way that he could not help seeing them, then put them in her hand-bag, and walked slowly away in the direction which she supposed Martha had taken.

"Cards, Sister Abigail?" cried the Deacon. "I am astonished!"

"I don't know as it's a sin to have your fortin told."

"Beware, sister, she's enticin' yer."

"All I know," said Abigail, "is that she told me com-fortin' things and brought a mighty flow of peace to my mind."

"Here comes the Elder," said the Deacon. "My advice to you, Abigail, is to tell him all your shortcomings and pray that you may be delivered from temptation in the futur'."

"Good day, Sister Abigail," said Elder Merrill, as he nodded to the Deacon, and, passing him, extended his hand to Miss March.

Abigail looked up at him: "Same eyes and chin and wrinkles in the forrid. I have found you out."

"Why, what have I done?" asked the astonished clergyman.

"Pined in secret," said Abigail, heaving a heavy sigh. "You can tell me all."

"Oh, I may tell you all," exclaimed the clergyman, still more astonished.

"Out with it," cried Abigail; "you needn't be afraid of Patience Danks. I know all about her."

Mr. Merrill thought to himself: "She must have had an attack of brain palsy and it has left her in an imbecile condition."

"Frankie, Frankie, look at me."

Mr. Merrill recoiled and held up his hands: "Go back! Go back, Sister Abigail!"

Abigail took a card from her pocket: "Yes, it is true — what she told me was true. It's just like you and she told me that you loved me in secret, but dare not tell me so."

This was more than Mr. Merrill could stand and he turned and fled from the scene.

"What a bashful man!" said Abigail, as she gazed after his retreating figure.

Mr. Merrill walked home with Winnifred. He had his suspicions and was determined to find out whether they were true.

"Can you tell fortunes, Miss Winnifred?"

The question was so unexpected that Winnifred could not repress a laugh. They had reached the steps of the house.

"You have had your joke, Miss Winnifred. We are quits, now. In future, let us have honorable warfare."

"And what is the warfare about?" asked Winnifred.

"Your heart is the fortress and I seek its capitulation."

Winnifred's eyes fell: "It is well garrisoned for defence."

"I presumed as much. There would be little glory in its capture if it were not defended."

"Mr. Merrill," said Winnie, "I respect you and it is my duty to undeceive you. I am already engaged."

"But not married!" he exclaimed. "I am repulsed, but not defeated."

Winnifred stood on the top step looking down at him. Night was coming on. She looked towards the west with its gorgeous coloring.

"The sun is going to bed, Mr. Merrill, and so am I. I am very tired."

"Are you not coming to see the bonfire and the fireworks?" he asked.

She pointed to the great red ball on the horizon's edge: "What can we poor mortals do in comparison with that? Good night, Mr. Merrill."

"Good night, Miss Winton."

And thus ended Winnifred's first Fourth of July in the country.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE LITTLE RED COAT

ABOUT ten days after the celebration of our national holiday in Snickersville, Mr. Enoch Scales brought Winnifred a letter from Mr. Hosea Fogg. Before parting company with the missive, Mr. Scales scrutinized the postmark carefully, and remarked :

"Guess yer friends in New York have found out where you are."

"I have no occasion, that I am aware of, to hide myself," replied Winnifred, somewhat coolly.

"Oh, that's all right; but I naturally keep my eye on the mail, and I noticed you did not have many letters."

"Two cents, I believe," said Winnifred, as she passed him the money.

"Kerrect to a dot. I don't s'pose you've changed yer mind 'bout what were talkin' about, that day up to the piggery."

"No, Mr. Scales, my answer is still — no !"

"Wall, no harm done. I didn't want yer to lose the chance in case yer wanted it," said Mr. Scales, as he walked away.

Winnifred was sitting on the piazza, working on what Mandy called "that everlasting embroidery." She threw it down and opened the letter, entirely destroying the envelope in so doing.

The letter informed his good friend, Miss Winton, that he had succeeded in obtaining a position on a prominent New York daily. It also contained the information that

he had discarded his baptismal name of Hosea Fogg and was now known as Percy Brewster.

It rained in the afternoon and Winnifred was deprived of her usual jaunt, with little Davy for company, through the orchard, down by the brook, or across the hay-fields, which were now rapidly putting on their second coat of green. Confined within-doors, she answered Mr. Fogg's letter.

MY DEAR MR. BREWSTER :

I was very glad to hear from you, and to learn that you have secured a good position, although it was obtained, in my opinion, through very questionable means. I was positively shocked when I read your obituary notices. How could you so lacerate the feelings of the living, as to use the word "Planted." The relatives of the departed, armed with clubs, pistols, and shot-guns, scoured the town on Fourth of July day, in search of Mr. Donaldson, who was conspicuously absent. Your little poems were very funny, but calculated to make the judicious grieve. Now, I've scolded you to my heart's content. I'm told that Mr. Donaldson arrived in town the night before the Fourth, and left *very* early next morning. The *White Mountain Sun* has sunk below the horizon, never to rise again. *Sic transit gloria mundi*, as the old Romans used to say.

From your critical friend, but well wisher,

WINNIFRED WINTON.

After the letter was written, Winnifred opened her two trunks and took out everything that was in them. A trunk-cleaning is as necessary as house-cleaning, and what better time for it than a rainy afternoon.

At the bottom of the second trunk, she found something that caused her to start back with a slight scream of surprise :

"Oh!"

What she beheld were two letters addressed to Olney Dangerfield which she had taken from the top of Colonel Hix's desk that day in New York. The postmarks were

illegible, the dates were a week apart, and the handwriting was that of a woman.

She sat down, holding the letters in her hand. How careless she had been. Would Olney ever forgive her? But where was he? She had not seen, nor even heard from him since the day of the injunction. Had he met the person who wrote the letters, and was he angry with her? Then the question came to her, "Do I love him?" She was alone and could argue that question with herself: "I'm sure I thought I did when he placed that ring upon my finger." She looked at her hand. The ring was gone. She had sold it, and perhaps her love for him had gone with it.

"How foolish!" she cried, as she brushed away a tear that would come. Then she dropped upon her knees and began assorting a confused mass of theatrical finery. She unrolled a piece of red cloth. "What was that for?" she asked herself. "I know what I will do with it. Little Davy needs a coat to go with those pantaloons that make him look so cute."

With Winnifred to conceive an idea usually meant the quick carrying of the same into effect. Finding him awake after his nap, she took him to her own room, put down the measures, found just the pattern which she needed in a fashion book which was in one of her trunks, cut it out, and was soon busily plying her needle. The storm did not abate until the next afternoon. When the setting sun broke through a mass of dun-hued clouds, the coat was done and ready for the wearer.

The next morning Mr. Stark called.

"Well, Miss Winton, the job is done, and Marthy and the rest on 'em can go home soon as they've a mind to and set things to rights."

"Did you bring your bill?" asked Winnifred.

"Wall, yes, I made it out and brought it along, but I guess you don't want to pay it 'til you see whether things are ship-shape or not."

"Well, if anything is wrong, I know you will make it right," said Winnifred, smiling.

"You can bank on that. I've worked in this 'ere town, man and boy, for fifty year, and 'twouldn't do to go back on myself now."

Winnifred took the bill. "Only fifty-one dollars and a half. Why, I was afraid it would be much larger. You've done so much more than we at first contemplated."

"Wall, I'm goin' to cut it down a little and make it a round fifty dollars. Yer see, the day that Plum and Eben helped on the shingling, I jest stood 'round an' bossed, and I don't jest feel as though that dollar and a half ought to come to me."

It took Winnifred but a few minutes to get her pocket-book and settle the bill.

"Wall," said Mr. Stark, "you jest go over and look at it, an' them things that ain't right I'll fix up in a jiffy."

After dinner, Winnifred put the little red coat on Davy.

"He looks just like one of our roosters," said Mandy.

"We'll go across lots, Davy; the roads are muddy, but the sun has dried the grass."

Mr. Stark had done a good job. The paint was not quite dry. Winnifred opened some of the windows to let in the warm, dry air. The furniture had been packed away in some of the rooms which had not needed repairs.

"What a job it will be to fix things," thought Winnifred. "But Mandy, and Plum, and Eben said they would help. Come, Davy, we'll go home now."

They went through the field that was next to the one in which the barn stood. The grass was full of buttercups, and little Davy ran to and fro, clutching at them eagerly

until both hands were full. Sometimes he was far ahead, and at other times far behind.

Winnifred reached the bars. Before getting through them, as it was much easier to do this than to take them down, she turned and called to Davy to follow her. Thinking that he would surely do so, she got through and then turned to help him.

Instead of following her, he had turned and run back to the centre of the field, attracted by a cluster of red clover blossoms.

He was pulling them off, one by one, when Winnifred heard a sound that sent a chill to her heart.

"The bull!"

There he was, head down, rushing wildly towards the little boy in the little red coat, who was tossing the clover blossoms over his head, laughing with delight, wholly unconscious of his deadly peril.

Winnifred could not move — she could not utter a sound. Then she saw Bat Mulvey and Jeff Smith, pitchforks in hand, chasing the bull. Winnifred knew that they could not overtake him in time to save little Davy.

But a rescuer was at hand. Winnifred did not see from whence he came; but she knew it was little Stub Dutcher. How fast he ran — never so fast before! He overtook the animal, passed him, gave a lurch forward, caught little Davy from the ground, and ran at full speed towards the stone wall, on the other side of which Winnifred stood — helpless, immovable.

The bull turned quickly and made after him. Stub must have realized that he could not hope to get over the wall with the child in his arms, before the bull reached him.

"Catch him!" he cried.

Summoning all his strength, he threw little Davy over

the wall into Winnifred's arms. She had not time to prepare for the shock and she was felled to the ground, vainly trying to keep the child from coming in contact with it.

She did not faint, but for a while, she knew not how long, she could see and hear nothing. When she opened her eyes and got up on her feet, she saw that the bars were down, and a moment later Bat and Jeff appeared, bearing the body of poor little Stub, the blood pouring from two horrid wounds in his back. The bull had gored him as he was climbing over the wall.

Winnifred's self-possession returned. "Bring him to the house at once," she cried. "I will take the child."

"As they went upstairs, Winnifred said: "Do not take Stub up to the attic. Carry him to my room and put him on my bed."

As soon as she had laid little Davy upon the bed in his mother's room, she went in search of the men.

"Jeff," she cried, "go for Doctor Danby at once. You can run faster than Bat." Then she turned to Mr. Mulvey: "Take those towels, press them against the wounds, and try to stop the flow of blood. It is all that we can do until the doctor comes. Oh, I wish we had some brandy."

Mr. Mulvey took a bottle from his pocket and held it up. "There's a little fine old whiskey left in it," he said.

"Thank God!" cried Winnifred. "Moisten his lips with it every few minutes. I will be back soon."

When Winnifred reached Martha's room, she found her kneeling in a paroxysm of grief beside the bed.

"He's dead — I know he is. It is the punishment for my sin. David's father told me that it would come — and it has. Oh, God! You have taken my husband, why could you not leave me my little boy — my darling —

my only hope — the only tie that kept me in this miserable world ?” Then her head sank upon the pillow beside that of little Davy. She was dumb with grief.

An hour passed before Dr. Danby had examined his two patients and was prepared to state the result of his diagnoses. “I can do nothing for Stub,” said he. “He is bleeding internally, and there is no way of stopping it. He may be kept alive with a stimulant for an hour or two, but no longer. I think the little boy has a slight concussion of the brain. He is unconscious and I cannot tell the extent of his injury for some time yet. If he revives, send for me at once. If he does not, the case is hopeless.”

Martha, who had been listening intently, at the word “hopeless” uttered a low moan, and fell in a dead swoon. She was taken down-stairs to Mandy’s room and left in charge of Grandsire Atwood, who could not be made to understand the extent of the calamity which had fallen upon them.

“I will look after little Davy,” said Mandy to Winnifred, “and you can stay with the other one.”

Winnifred sat down by the bed in which poor little Stub lay in agony. Great drops of sweat stood on his brow. She wiped them away with a caressing touch. Stub opened his eyes, and there was a grateful look in them. She moistened his lips with the whiskey, which seemed to give him new strength.

“No one ever loved me,” said he, “but mother, and she died when I was a little boy.”

“Don’t talk, Stub,” said Winnifred. “You are too weak. Wait until you are stronger.”

“If I don’t talk now,” said he, “I never shall. Was little Davy hurt?” Winnifred nodded. “I’m so sorry. I did the best I could, but old Jack was too quick for me.”

“You acted like a little hero,” cried Winnifred, impul-



WINNIFRED AND STUB DUTCHER



sively. "If you had been a king you could not have done better."

A smile lighted up the sufferer's face. "I want to tell you something about myself. Father never liked me — because I was not like other boys, I suppose. I couldn't help it, could I? After mother died, he used to beat me, and I ran away from home and came here. My name isn't Stub Dutcher; it's Gottlieb Weintge, but the folks here couldn't say it, so they called me Stub, because I was small, and Dutcher because I was a German. I haven't been very bad. I couldn't be good all the time because some of them didn't treat me very well."

He closed his eyes and lay motionless for some time. Winnifred thought that the end had come. She had never been in the presence of death before. She had always thought that it must be horrible; but now she felt within her heart that it could be glorious.

She wet his lips again. He opened his eyes and spoke. The words came faintly :

"Nobody has ever kissed me since mother died."

Winnifred put her arms about him, drew him towards her so that his head rested upon her shoulder, and kissed him.

"Good-bye," he said. "I love you." And with a smile upon his face, the fragile tie that bound him to life was broken.

Winnifred laid him back tenderly upon the pillow. She had not been, and was not, what is called a Christian, but in the fullness of her heart she sank upon her knees beside the bed, clasped her hands and breathed a prayer that poor little Stub might go straight to his loving mother's arms and find in the next world that happiness which had been denied him in this.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

LOST ON THE MOUNTAINS

As Winnifred arose to her feet, she saw Mandy standing in the doorway regarding her.

"Little Davy is calling for his mother," said Mandy.

"And poor little Stub has gone to meet his." As Winnifred spoke the tears came into her eyes. "Oh, Mandy," she cried, "I've been thinking about that little red coat. Perhaps if I had not made it this terrible thing would not have happened," and she glanced towards the dead face, upon which the last smile still lay.

"Oh, nonsense," said Mandy. "Things that is to be will be. Bat has owned up that he stuck the pitchfork into the bull and old Jack wouldn't stand that from anybody. But we must go down and tell Martha about Davy. She will be so glad."

Before leaving the room, Mandy drew the sheet up so that it covered Stub's face. "We always do that in the country," she said.

As they went down-stairs, Mandy whispered to Winnifred: "You tell her. You know her ways much better than I do."

Martha was not in the sitting-room; neither was Grand-sire Atwood. A search was made through the house and barn, but no trace of the old man or his daughter could be found.

While they were standing irresolute, not knowing what course to follow, Dr. Danby returned.

"I knew there was no hope for Stub," said he, "but I felt sure the little boy would come out all right. He was

stunned by the fall. If it had been a longer one, or if he had struck a stone, he would probably have had concussion of the brain and would have died. I'll send Miss Putney over right away. She's the one we always call upon to lay folks out. On my way home I'll see Mr. Stark and tell him to come and see about the coffin."

Miss Putney came and performed the last offices for little Stub, not forgetting the country custom of putting two old-fashioned pennies on his eyes. "I cannot bear," said she, "to have a dead person stare at me the way they do."

"I can make one out of pine," said Mr. Stark, "and paint it black."

"Is that the best you can do?" asked Winnifred. It seemed a poor shift for a dead hero.

"I can put in some of them silver nails," he said. "That will brighten it up a bit."

"Please wait a moment," said Winnifred, and she ran up to her room.

When she came back, she brought a roll of black cloth. "Don't, please don't, paint it black, Mr. Stark. Cover it with this cloth, and use as many of the silver nails as you can. I will pay for them; it is all I can do for him, poor little fellow."

The funeral took place in the Union Church. The news of the heroic rescue of little Davy by Stub Dutcher had gone through the town, from mouth to mouth, for there was no *White Mountain Sun* to disseminate the tidings. Every seat was filled, and the Rev. Franklin Merrill, from his pulpit, looked down upon the largest congregation that he had ever witnessed within the church walls.

There was a reading from the Bible, and singing and a fervent prayer. Then Mr. Merrill said: "I cannot close

this service without making a few remarks which, I think, are pertinent to the occasion. The tragic end of this young hero who lies before us, his mortal form cold in death, is an object lesson which each of us should take home to his heart. It has been said, Man does not live by bread alone, nor should he live for himself alone. In the face of danger, he is prone to think of self-preservation. It is the brave man, the hero, who, in such an exigency, forgets himself and thinks only of those who are helpless and need his assistance. One young life has gone out as quickly as we would snuff a candle, but another young life still burns brightly. If this deed had been done in some great city, sympathizers and admirers would have put a monument over this self-sacrificing youth, with this inscription — He Gave his Life to Save Another's."

After Stub's death and burial, everybody in town said: "What a good little fellow he was." Even Miss March said to several members of the "Ebenezer" Society that "it was a shame folks had treated Stub Dutcher so badly"; and she told Mrs. Struthers that "she had given Stub doughnuts a great many times"; but she did not say that the doughnuts in question were a week or more old, and that she had said to the Deacon, "Anything that the pigs will eat will satisfy Stub Dutcher."

Stub was laid to rest in the little burying-ground; and Winnifred had a slate headstone put up, on which was cut —

G. III.

Known as

"STUB DUTCHER."

This did not satisfy her. Something more was needed. Then Mr. Merrill's words were added:

"He Gave his Life to Save Another's."

What had become of Martha and Grandsire Atwood? When the fond mother revived, there was but one thought in her mind — little Davy — her boy, the only tie that bound her to life, was dead. For the time she forgot her old father and his loving care which had never failed her. Her mind reeled and she ran from the house, not caring where she went, nor how soon death might come to end her own sufferings. But she was not unobserved; Grandsire Atwood grasped his walking-stick and followed her.

Martha took a cross-road which led towards the mountains. Hearing steps behind her, she did not turn to see who it was, but ran on, as if fleeing from some new peril. The road was dusty, and the sun's rays beat down upon her unprotected head — but she could not, would not stop.

Although her physical strength was greater by far than her mental, it could not stand so severe a strain and, at last, overcome by fatigue, she fell prostrate, as she reached the top of Jenkins' Hill, as one of the small mountains had been named.

She lay there for some time, senseless, before Grandsire Atwood, who had managed to keep her in sight, reached the spot. Then he, too, weak and trembling, sank down beside her.

A rough road led over Jenkins' Hill. Up the steep incline came an empty cart drawn by two horses. The driver, a country youth, wearing a pair of overalls and a broad-brimmed straw hat, whipped up his horses as he reached the top of the hill. But he almost pulled them back upon their haunches, as his eyes fell upon three persons by the roadside.

Two persons, a man and a woman were lying upon the ground, while near them stood a man who looked like a tramp.

"Somethin's up," thought Calvin Hopkins, and leaning

forward, he picked up a heavy stake that was in the cart.

"Where are you going?" asked the tramp.

"I don't know as it's any of your business," said Calvin. "I think I've a better right to ask you what you've been doing."

"I understand you," said the tramp. "I haven't done anything yet, but I'm going to, with your assistance. I found them here," and he pointed to the prostrate forms, "just as you see them, not more than a minute ago."

"Do you know who they are?" asked Calvin.

"I think I've seen them over in Snickersville," was the reply. "But from something I've heard, I don't think they want to go back there. Now, will you let me ask you again — Where are you going?"

Over into Vermont," said Calvin — "to Thirlby."

"Don't you have to go through Burlow?" asked the tramp.

"I can by taking another road," said Calvin.

"Well, jump down and help me lift them into the cart. I'll give you five dollars if you'll take us three over to Burlow."

Calvin Hopkins was a shrewd young man, who believed in having the bird in his hand. "Let's see your money," he said.

"A good master pays when his work is done," remarked the tramp. "If you're not paid when we get to Burlow, turn us over to the constable."

After Grandsire Atwood and Martha had been lifted into the cart, the tramp asked: "Can't we keep the sun off of them in some way? I'm afraid they are both sun-struck." His eye lighted on a roll of burlap which Calvin had used for a cushion. "Let's have that," he cried. "They need it more than you do."

There were poles running up on either side of the cart.

Calvin found some string in his pockets, and when the burlap was spread over the poles and tied to them, a most grateful shade was improvised. ,

It was past noon. The cart rattled over the dusty road, but the sleepers did not awaken. The river was crossed by means of a covered bridge ; but the noise of the horses' hoofs upon the wooden roadway did not arouse Martha or her father.

"Are they dead?" asked Calvin, in a whisper.

"No," said the tramp, "only tired out. They were both breathing all right when I found them."

The afternoon wore away, and at about six o'clock the cart drew up before a house which stood close to the church, in the town of Burlow. It was the parsonage. The tramp jumped down, and rapped on the door. It was soon opened by the aged clergyman. The tramp said something to him which Calvin could not overhear, although he tried to do so.

The clergyman disappeared, but returned in a short time and handed something to the tramp.

"It's all right," he said to Hopkins; "we must take them into the house."

"Not jest yet," said Calvin. "You said I could take you all to the lock-up if I didn't get my money."

The tramp took out a bill, but drew it back before Calvin could grasp it.

"Not jest yet," said the tramp, imitating the other's tone. "When they are all safe inside, the money's yours, but not until then."

CHAPTER XXXIX

CUPID'S CAMPAIGN

FOR several days after the disappearance of Grandsire Atwood and Martha, a diligent search was made for them. Three parties were made up under the lead of Plum Gifford, Tom Appleby, and Eben Wilkes, and every road leading to the mountains was carefully searched, but without success.

The evening of the fourth day, Mandy found a letter tucked under the door. It was addressed to "The young lady from New York who is boarding here." Mandy took it at once to Winnifred, who did not open it until she was alone. It contained these words :

"Do not worry. They are both safe. All will come out right in the end.

JOE MIGGLES."

Winnifred ran down-stairs, eager to spread the news. She burst into the sitting-room, where Mandy and Plum were seated, so suddenly, that the young lady and gentleman, who were occupying the centre of the sofa in close proximity to each other, sprang apart, each seeking a corner as far removed from the other as possible.

"Oh, they are found !" cried Winnifred.

"Where are they ?" asked Plum.

"Well, I really don't know that. The letter which I received has no postmark and no date, but it says they are both safe and that all will come out right in the end, and for us not to worry."

"It's a very mysterious affair," said Mandy, "but I suppose we'll have to wait until they get ready to come

back. If they had stayed here, we might have had the house all fixed up."

"I will pay their board until they come back," said Winnifred.

"You shan't do nothing of the kind," replied Mandy. "I haven't got much money, but I'm not so mean as to charge people for what they don't have."

After Winnifred left the room, Mandy and Plum resumed their former positions and took up again the conversation which had been so abruptly broken off.

"As I was sayin', Mandy, when your two hired men git through and leave, who's goin' to do the chores out to the barn an' 'round?"

"I haven't thought about it. Father used to say, Never cross a bridge 'til you come to it."

"But you'll have to think 'bout it before long," persisted Plum, "and besides, Miss Winton will be goin' back to New York in the course of a month, an' then you'll be left alone in the house."

"I ain't afraid."

"Oh, I know you're brave enough, Mandy, but there's tramps 'round town. I never told you 'bout it before, but the other day I saw the young lady upstairs talkin' to one. I was hid behind some bushes, an' when I see him make a move towards her, an' she jumped back, I was jest gittin' ready to go to her assistance when they seemed to git on good terms, an' they talked together for quite a while. I haven't seen no trace of him since, but when there's one of them fellers 'round, there's apt to be more."

"What are you drivin' at, Plum?"

"Well, I'll tell yer, Mandy. I think it's 'bout time we stopped talkin' 'bout gettin' married, an' jest go an' tell Mr. Merrill to put up the banns for a month from tomorrow."

"Bat, when a man has gamber toes, what has he?"

"Why, he has 'em. Joe Rynders that used to live down on the Ridge place, he had the worst case of gambers I ever see."

"But what are they?" cried Mandy, losing patience.

"Joe had to have boots two sizes too large for him, and every time he stepped, the gambers used to hurt him."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Mandy, "you mean corns."

"Well, they're like 'em," said Mr. Mulvey, "but they take a good deal more room. They've got another name for 'em. English George, who used to work with Joe, used to call 'em bun — bun — bun —"

Mandy began to laugh: "Oh, I know what you mean, Bat. You mean bunions."

After Mr. Mulvey went back to resume his duties in the orchard, Mandy became penitent.

"Bunions! Oh, Plum, forgive me."

"No, I won't."

"Yes, you will. Forgive me, Plummie, dear."

Plum made believe that he was very indignant: "No, I won't. It's bad enough to be told about what you've got, but it's mean to accuse a man of havin' what he hasn't got."

It was Mandy's turn to become indignant: "Well, sit there and sulk it out, if you want to. I'm goin' into the house with this pan of milk. I want to use it for cookin'."

As Mandy started towards the house, holding the pan of milk carefully so as not to spill its contents, Plum thought that it was a good time to make up. He stole up behind her and, leaning over her shoulder, kissed her on the cheek. For a moment, Mandy's hold upon the pan of milk was precarious.

"You mean thing!" she cried, "to take advantage in that way."

"Oh, I've got gamber toes, have I?" said Plum, as he leaned forward and kissed her on the other cheek.

"Plum Gifford, if you do that again, I'll souse this milk all over you."

By this time Mandy had reached the step at the kitchen door. As she balanced herself, Plum said :

"I read in a paper once that if you wanted to show a woman that you loved her, you ought to kiss her on the back of the neck," and he suited the action to the word.

Then he turned and ran towards the barn. As Mandy set the milk pan upon the table, she said to herself, reflectively :

"I don't believe Plum's got bunions. He couldn't run that way if he had."

It is a good old-fashioned country custom, occasionally, to ask the clergyman to dinner on Sunday, and Mandy and Plum decided that the most auspicious time for such an invitation would be the day upon which their banns were proclaimed in church. The widow with whom the Rev. Mr. Merrill boarded, did not have a very high reputation as a cook, but the rooms which he occupied were large and well furnished, and he had thought it best to put up with the lesser evil for the sake of the greater good. Miss Harkins' fame as a cook, however, had spread far and wide, and Mr. Merrill gladly accepted the invitation. Perhaps, if he had looked down into his heart, he would have found that the probable opportunity of having a private conversation with Miss Winton had greatly influenced his decision.

At the dinner table, a running conversation, more secular in its nature than sacred, was kept up, in which the pastor good-naturedly joined. Marriage was the principal topic of discussion, and the conversation disclosed the fact that Mr. Merrill and Miss Winton were at swords points upon some important questions connected with the subject.

Mandy refused all offers of assistance from Winnifred.

"Plum may as well get used to housekeeping duties," she said, "for he'll have to help me after we're married. You can entertain Mr. Merrill so much better than I can, Miss Winton, that I wish you would take him into the sitting-room and talk to him until Plum and I get our work done."

Winnifred was obliged to comply with Mandy's request, and she was soon seated in the sitting-room with the duty of entertaining Mr. Merrill thrust upon her.

Mr. Merrill did not wait for her to begin the conversation.

"How long have you followed your profession, Miss Winton?"

"The history of that would be the history of my life. I think I began in the cradle."

"Tell me something of yourself, won't you?"

"Well," said Winnifred, "my father and mother were both actors, and I was taken upon the stage when but an infant. I don't think I had a speaking part, although I may have cried during the performance. I am sure that my name was on the bill though, for after I grew up, my mother showed me a copy of it. It read: Mary, Gertrude's child — Baby Brown."

"Brown!" exclaimed Mr. Merrill. "I thought —"

"You are probably not well acquainted with stage customs, Mr. Merrill. My parents' name was Brown, but when at the age of sixteen, I adopted the stage as a profession, I assumed the name of Winnifred Winton."

"And what is your real name?" he asked; "the whole of it, I mean."

"Oh, that's the funny part of it," said Winnifred, with a laugh. My father and mother were great admirers of the celebrated actress, Sarah Bernhardt, and they could

think of no better way of showing their appreciation of that lady's wonderful dramatic talent than by naming me for her — so now you have my real name — Sarah Bernhardt Brown."

"Thank you for your confidence," said Mr. Merrill. "Do you intend following the profession as your life's work?"

"I suppose so. I am fitted for nothing else. In years to come, when you are a shining light in the pulpit in some great city, you will hear of Miss Winnifred Winton doing Little Eva in one night stands."

He gave her a reproving look: "Pardon me, but that remark is unworthy of you. You are fitted for something higher and nobler than the profession which you have adopted. Your life is precious, your soul priceless! Choose other paths where you will not be exposed to the annoyance and rudeness which your calling invites from the thoughtless. I feel it my duty as a worker in the Master's field to speak. I am not in sympathy with your calling. I have seen your heart touched by others' woes, instantly responsive with a flood of sympathy and practical charity. We need such as you are in our fields. Come!"

"If I should give up my profession, as you suggest, and remain in this town, will you agree to give up your connection with the Ebenezer Moral Reform Society and help me to organize a Christian Charity Club? I think one is needed in Snickersville."

Mr. Merrill did not reply, and Winnifred went on:

"Pardon my irrelevant remarks. I suppose there is some good in me, but, under certain circumstances, my wickedness, like cream, comes to the top. The kind words which you have said almost persuade me to think myself quite good, but I dare not venture in unknown ways. The path which I am following was opened by

those whom I loved and who loved me. But they are gone and I am alone. If I do the best I can, I know they would approve and, no matter what you may hear or see, think of me as well as you can."

"I understand you," said Mr. Merrill. "Perhaps you are right. We discussed the subject of marriage during dinner, and I trust you will not consider me impertinent if I ask you whether you intend to get married?"

"I will not resent your question, Mr. Merrill, although some women would. Instead, I will answer frankly. I do intend to get married, and I am already engaged. I told you so once before."

Mr. Merrill shut his lips firmly together. Then he said: "I have tried to forget it." A home question escaped him: "And is it an actor to whom you are engaged?"

"Yes, to an actor."

"May I again beg your indulgence, considering that we have given so much attention to this matter?"

"If you enjoy the conversation, I have no objection to continuing it," said Winnifred.

"I was reading an article in a magazine the other day," Mr. Merrill went on, "the author of which advised all women never to marry actors. I wish I had brought it with me, but I did not anticipate the turn that our dinner table conversation would take. The writer spoke of the vanity, the cruelty, the conceit and the fickleness of actors as a class. He referred to their extravagances in some directions and their miserably small economies in others, and, considering that he had proved his indictment by the testimony which he offered, he said he had come to the conclusion that most actors were impossible as husbands."

"You have given me the indictment and the verdict, but I have not heard the evidence," said Winnifred.

"I can remember but little of it. He cited one instance of a man and wife, both prominent in the dramatic profession. For a time they were on the high road to success, but evil days came, and they bore, as they usually do, more heavily upon the wife than upon the husband, for she was burdened with the care and support of two children. Her health failed and, in her extreme need, she applied to her husband for help, sending one of her children to act as intermediary. The father quite overlooked the fact that the child's shoes were full of holes, and that his wife needed money for doctor's attendance and medicines — and perhaps food. He took the little girl to a store and bought her the handsomest doll that he could find. He could not have paid less than fifteen or twenty dollars for it. When her daughter returned home with her present, the mother first laughed and then cried when she saw the manner in which her request had been met."

"There are wise men and fools in all professions," Winnifred remarked.

"Some of the writer's comments," continued Mr. Merrill, "I think were hardly just. As I remember, he said that a man who changed his clothes three times a day and was always peeping at himself in the looking-glass was not desirable as a life partner."

"Perhaps he was surveying his make-up," suggested Winnifred.

"It may have been so," remarked Mr. Merrill. "The author thought it was this vanity and selfishness that make actor-husbands cruel. He said it was not always the brutal kind of cruelty, but that an actor had an opportunity to learn from the parts played by him, if not from his nature, the art of refined cruelty. He said they might not often resort to blows, but that he knew of one instance in which a public favorite went home to his wife,

whose intelligence, sympathy, and money, as much as his own talents, had placed him at the front of his profession, and said : We have lived our last day together. I want you to free me ! Could not a man do a cruel thing in a less cruel way than that ? ”

“ Do not doctors, and lawyers, and even clergymen, use similar language under the same circumstances ? If a blow is to be inflicted, why not do it quickly, instead of prolonging the torture ? ”

“ The writer did not place all the blame upon actors,” said Mr. Merrill. “ He said, very often, foolish women expect that the men they marry will be exceptions to the usual rule, but too late they find out that in the case of actors, there are but very few creditable exceptions. He added that actors are the most conceited class of men on the earth, and that no intelligent woman could enjoy living with a man who spoke, thought, dreamed, and even talked in his sleep, constantly of himself.”

“ Can you remember any more ? ” asked Winnifred, somewhat haughtily.

“ Only this. He said that an actor is always well dressed, with a flower in his buttonhole, even though he and his family have not had a square meal for a week.”

“ You have placed the evidence before me in a very compact and forceful manner,” said Winnifred. “ Now, will you allow me to present the other side of the case ? ”

Mr. Merrill bowed, smiling : “ Why, certainly, it is your right.”

“ My advice is,” said Winnifred, “ never marry an actress. Let me formulate an indictment against them as a class. They are noted for their violent tempers, peculiar moods, self-consciousness, lack of order, want of domesticity, dearth of reserve and poise, extravagance, and emotional storms. For these and many other reasons,

actresses are usually failures as wives. If I were to give advice to my fellowmen, I would say: Better, far better, the corner of a housetop alone by yourself, than with a woman of artistic temperament in a grand mansion."

"How can you say such things of your own profession?" asked Mr. Merrill.

"Like yourself, I am not repeating what I know, but what I have read and what has been told to me. An aged lady of my acquaintance declared that she never knew an actress who was a good housekeeper. She said they lacked order; that their theatrical training had left them without a housekeeping side; that things go at loose ends in a house of which an actress is the mistress; and, she added, that there never was a man, however much a Bohemian he might be, who did not wish for a well ordered home. You have said, or rather repeated the author's words, that actors are extravagant. My friend admitted that, but maintained actresses were just as much so. In her opinion they had no sense of proportion in the matter of expenses; that they would spend fifty dollars for an art rug or square for the reception room, and stop up holes in a coffee pot with tissue paper.

"Speaking of artistic temperament," Winnifred continued, "this lady said it was a synonym and often a cause for a bad temper. She said she knew an actor who told her that because he had refused to give his wife money for a visit to England, where her parents resided, she had chased him about the house with a carving knife, and that he only escaped serious injury by jumping from the kitchen window. Don't you think, Mr. Merrill, that there is as much truth in my presentation of the case as in the one made out by your friend the author? Perhaps the millennium will come some day and then all women will refuse to marry actors and all men will refuse to marry actresses,

and the members of the dramatic profession will have to be wedded to their art, and that alone. Have you noticed, Mr. Merrill, what a beautiful rose-bush that is just outside the window there?"

He did not have an opportunity to reply, and perhaps he would have found it difficult to answer a question so much at variance with the conversation which had preceded it, for at that moment Mandy and Plum entered the room.

Mr. Merrill arose and, after thanking Miss Harkins for a most appetizing dinner, and Miss Winton for a most entertaining conversation, took his departure.

"Why, how glum he looked," exclaimed Mandy. "What have you been sayin' to him, Miss Winton?"

"Oh, not much. He has been abusing actors, saying they make very poor husbands. I retorted by proving to to him that actresses make very undesirable wives, and I don't think he will ever marry one of our profession."

CHAPTER XL

A QUICK RESTITUTION

MR. Barnett's trip to the West was not marked by any eventful incident. The lady whom he wished to see had signed her letters Mrs. Harrison Goss, and he concluded that, for some reason unknown to him, she had decided not to assume the name of Dalton ; so, when he arrived in Dolby City, he inquired for the residence of Mrs. Harrison Goss and it was pointed out to him.

It was the house originally occupied by David Dalton, but Mrs. Goss had enlarged it, surrounded it with a garden, and had furnished the interior in the most expensive manner.

Mr. Barnett had purchased a large leathern wallet in which he had placed the certificate, feeling sure that the receptacle would be well filled with something more valuable to him when he returned home. Mrs. Goss, richly dressed, was seated in a finely furnished library when he was ushered into her presence. She received him politely, but coolly.

"So you thought it necessary, Mr. Barnett, to take a long journey in connection with our business?"

"I have treated myself as I would one of my clients," was his reply.

"I presume you have brought the document with you."

He took it from the wallet and spread it upon the table before her.

"So this is the original certificate. Where did you find it?"

"Among some papers that Mr. Timothy Atwood gave

me a long time ago. He wished me to look them over to see if they contained anything of value."

"Then you didn't think that the certificate was of any value to him or to his daughter? If you had thought so, of course you would have returned it."

Mr. Barnett winced perceptibly, but said nothing.

"And so," said Mrs. Goss, "you propose to sell this certificate to me?"

"That is the object of my visit here."

"And the price?"

"Was fixed by yourself — fifty thousand dollars."

Mrs. Goss read the certificate through, slowly and carefully. Looking up from it, she said :

"I suppose a woman, influenced by circumstances, could do such an act, but I cannot understand how you, who pretend to be a gentleman, can deliberately take a valuable paper belonging to one of your clients and dispose of it for your own benefit."

"Madam," said Mr. Barnett, in a dignified manner, "I think it is rather late to discuss the moral aspects of the case. It has now become a financial question between you and me, and, as I look upon it, of no concern of others."

"I suppose if I give you a draft on New York for the amount, it will be satisfactory."

"Banks and bankers sometimes fail," said Mr. Barnett. "I should prefer — I must insist upon the amount in money."

Mrs. Goss mused for a while : "The only way in which it can be done, then, is for you to accompany me to Butte, where I have some money on deposit."

Mr. Barnett reached across the table, took the certificate, folded it up deliberately, and placed it in his wallet. The woman laughed sardonically :

"I see you do not trust me."

"I beg your pardon, madam, but I am a lawyer, and lawyers never part with valuable papers until they have received an equivalent."

If Mr. Barnett had supposed that Mrs. Goss would ask him to become her guest he was mistaken.

"There is quite a good hotel in Dolby," she said, "where, I think, you will be satisfied with the accommodations. I cannot possibly go with you to Butte before day after to-morrow. While you are waiting, I will direct one of my foremen to show you about the mines. You may find them interesting."

Mr. Barnett had never been in a mining town before, and he did see much that was interesting and instructive.

"Money is always the same, no matter how it is made," he said to himself. "Whether dug from the ground or earned in a profession, it answers the same purpose — it buys what we wish and enables us to reach the summit of our ambition."

It was with a light heart that Mr. Barnett buttoned his coat over the wallet which contained fifty one-thousand dollar bills, and left Butte on his homeward journey. As he parted with Mrs. Goss, he remarked :

"I suppose you will destroy the certificate."

"It is mine, and I shall do with it as I please," was her reply, as she turned away.

Although Mr. Barnett reached Willoughby late in the evening, he procured a conveyance to take him to Snickersville. He placed the leathern wallet under his pillow, but awoke a dozen times during the night to make sure that his fortune had not taken wings and flown away. He was up before daylight the next morning and reached his office just as Eben was unlocking the front door. He gave his clerk directions that no one was to be admitted to the

private office until he notified him that he was ready to receive visitors.

Seated at his table, he counted the money and gloated over it. He knew in his heart that it was shameful money; that it was the price of a woman's honor, and a child's good name.

Eben was standing at the front door when he saw a tramp turn in from the roadway and approach the office.

"Is this where Lawyer Barnett hangs out?" the man asked.

"Yes, but he's busy now and can't see anybody. Call again."

The man paid no attention to the rebuff, but tried to enter the office. Eben blocked the way.

"You can't come in, I tell yer," said Eben.

"I'm coming in just the same," said the man. "I want to see Lawyer Barnett, and I mean to see him now."

Eben tried to push him from the step, but the man caught him about the waist, lifted him bodily in the air, and then threw him upon the grass.

"I don't want to hurt you," he said, "but you had better keep out of the way."

The tramp opened the door to the private office and walked in unceremoniously. Mr. Barnett slipped the wallet into the centre drawer of his desk and turned angrily towards his visitor:

"What business have you to come in here without being announced?"

"Oh, I've got business enough," said the man, "and very important, too. I want the advice of a lawyer, and as you're the only one in town, I had to come to you."

He took a paper from his pocket, unfolded it, and, holding it firmly in his grimy hands, asked:

"Did you ever see a paper like that before, Mr. Barnett?"

Mr. Barnett turned pale, but answered: "No!"

"Look again," said the man.

The lawyer could not believe his eyes. What he saw was the marriage certificate of David Dalton and Martha Atwood. He shook his head, and then repeated the word, "No."

Then the man's anger flamed up: "You lie, and you know you do!" he cried. "You have sold the original to Mrs. Harrison Goss, of Dolby City, Montana, for a certain sum of money. Now, you've got to do two things, if you wish to keep your good name in this town."

The lawyer could not look the man in the face, and his glance fell. This tramp knew everything. Who was he?

"The first thing I want you to do," said the man, "is to write a letter to Mrs. Harrison Goss, telling her that the certificate which you sold to her is of no value, and that you have cheated her out of her money. Just tell her that you have seen a duplicate of the certificate, and you can add that the clergyman who married David Dalton and Martha Atwood is still living and is willing to make out as many more copies as may be needed."

Mr. Barnett was on the defensive. He had acted in that capacity a great many times before for others, but this was a question of personal honor or dishonor.

"I will do nothing of the kind," he cried. "Martha Atwood will not try to prove anything. Her husband was a bigamist, for he married another woman when he knew his wife was living."

"You are not acquainted with all the facts in the case, Mr. Barnett. I think you will write the letter," and, leaning over, he whispered something in the lawyer's ear.

Mr. Barnett fell back in his chair as though paralyzed.

"I will bring Mr. Solomon Dalton into the case, if you wish," said the man: "It will blast one more honorable

name, but what's that?" and he laughed satirically.

"I will write the letter to-morrow. I am very busy to-day."

"You will do it now, while I am here. I cannot trust you."

The man kept his eyes fixed upon the lawyer's pen as it glided over the paper. When the letter was finished, he said :

"Let me read it."

When he read it through, he said : "You haven't said all I told you to, but it will do. Now, put down the word *Witness* beside your name."

When this was done, the man wrote beneath it the name which he had whispered in Mr. Barnett's ear.

"Now, take an envelope, write her name and address on it, and put a stamp on. Just at present, I am out of money. Now, give it to me. I will see that it is mailed."

There was a slight pause in the conversation.

"Now, I suppose, you want to know what I am going to ask you to do next. If the money you got from Mrs. Goss is in that safe, just unlock it and give the money to me. If you have it in your pocket or hid away somewhere, hand it over at once."

The lawyer sat irresolute. This, indeed, was quick restitution of ill-gotten gains. In fact, he was out of pocket, for he had paid his own expenses to and from Dolby City. He opened the drawer and threw the wallet to the man, who opened it and counted the money carefully several times. Then, taking one of the bills, he tossed it to the lawyer, saying, as he did so :

"Take that to cover your travelling expenses, and as some reward for your mean, dastardly action. Good service, even if rendered to the devil, ought to have some reward."

The man buttoned the wallet inside of his shabby coat. As he started to leave the room, Mr. Barnett said :

"Will anyone else know of this?"

"No," said the man, "only me and an angel. My name is Joe Miggles and hers I don't know."

As Joe went through the outer office, he smiled at Eben, and remarked : "I hope I didn't hurt you. It wasn't your fault — but he was very glad to see me."

CHAPTER XLI

A TRANSFORMATION

ONE morning just after breakfast, Miss Abigail March said to her brother-in-law :

"Deacon, I want you to come into the settin'-room. I've got sunthin' private I want to say to yer."

As she closed the door, she began : "I've stood this nonsense jest as long as I can. Now, my back is up, and sunthin's got to be done."

"Why, what are you talkin' about, Abigail?" said the astonished Deacon.

"I'm talkin' 'bout that Mr. Pudley — Brother Pudley, you call him. He's been livin' on us for nearly three months, sleepin' in the best room, an' livin' on the fat o' the land. Now, I think it's 'bout time for him to git out and make his livin' out o' somebody else. Of course, I know you pay for it, but you're likely to die afore I do, an' there'll be so much the less for me."

"He's been a great help to me in my Ebenezer work," the Deacon remarked, apologetically.

"Yes," said Abigail, "but since he's been here, I've been of no consequence. I used to be your adviser. Now, it's Mr. Pudley this, and Mr. Pudley that, and Mr. Pudley all the time. I've stood it long enough. I'm goin' to git married an' git out o' this."

"What!" screamed the Deacon. "You're goin' to get married. Who to?"

"You'll know when the banns are called in church. You're only a relative of mine by marriage, anyway. You can have Mr. Pudley to look after your house. He's told me two or three times how I ought to cook things."

The Deacon had a feeling akin to terror. How could he get along without Abigail? She had taken charge of his domestic affairs since the death of her sister, and he had said a hundred times: "Everything goes like clock-work in my house." As between Abigail and Jedediah Pudley there could be no choice.

"Don't go away, Abigail. I'll send Mr. Pudley right off. Can't your husband come and live here?"

"No," she said, sharply; "he's got a farm of his own."

The outcome was that Mr. Pudley was sent for and informed in unmistakable language by Miss March that his room was better than his company.

He took the matter very quietly: "I have been intending to go for some time, but before I leave, I wish to tell you that you have been harboring a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"I told you so, Deacon, I told you so!" cried Abigail.

"You are right, Miss March," said Mr. Pudley. "I am not what I seem, and for a long time I have seemed to be what I am not."

Four startled eyes gazed upon him and two voices cried in unison: "Who are you?"

"Do you remember," he asked, "the night you saw the show in the Town Hall, that there was a man about my size who played the part of a Count Lobsterclawski?"

"I do," said Miss March, "and I think he was the worst lookin' specimen of a man I ever laid my eyes on."

Mr. Dangerfield drew himself up and said in ponderous tones, quite different to the squeaky voice that had been the characteristic of Mr. Pudley: "I am the Count Lobsterclawski!"

"Well, what have you been 'round here for?" cried Abigail. "What business had you, a play-actor, to make your way into a christian home?"

"I had a purpose in view, and I have accomplished it," said Mr. Dangerfield. A lady friend of mine, who is living in this town at present, was much interested in the fortune, or rather misfortune, of a young woman named Martha Dalton and her husband, Mr. David Dalton, your son. While here, I have overheard much of your private conversation, and I know you wrote to your son that his wife was dead when you knew that she was living. I think, too, that you told your daughter-in-law that her husband was dead when you knew what you said was untrue. If you will make out my board bill, I will see that it is settled — at some future time. The injunction which you procured prevented me from earning my living, and you will have to wait for your money until I have secured another position."

Mr. Pudley put his earthly possessions into his grip-sack, and, without waiting to say good-bye to Deacon Dalton and his amiable sister-in-law, made his way at once to Miss Harkins' house.

He asked for Miss Winton, and was shown into the sitting-room by Mandy. When Winnifred came down, she was naturally surprised at finding who her visitor was.

"Hullo, Winnie!" cried Mr Pudley, and Winnifred's surprise was turned into astonishment.

"Actors can do most anything," he said. "Count Lobsterclawski is thinking of giving up the stage and becoming a detective. How do you like my make-up, Winnie?"

"What! Jedediah Pudley — Olney Dangerfield?"

"One and the same person, indivisible, but capable of acting many parts. Sit down, I have something to tell you."

He repeated his recent conversation with Deacon Dalton and his sister-in-law. "I had to live some way. I told

them I would pay them for my board one of these days."

"Why didn't you let me know you were here?" asked Winnifred.

"I was afraid to. Miss March watched me like a cat. I knew if I was seen talking to you, that her suspicions would be aroused. I made friends with Eben Wilkes, and he has kept me posted as to how you were getting along."

"Excuse me for a few minutes, Olney."

Winnifred went upstairs. When she returned, she handed him the two letters which she had taken from the top of Colonel Hix's desk.

"Pardon me, Olney, I intended to give them to you the day I took them, but I must have thrown them into my trunk and forgotten them. I found them only a few days ago."

He read them through.

"Would you like to know what is in them? It is my duty to tell you, anyway. Before I went upon the stage, I lived in Renwick, the town in which I was born, which lies between here and Peachley. The day I left you I went to see Mary Cramer, a young girl to whom I was engaged before I left home. She was opposed to my going on the stage, and we parted. The first letter tells me of the death of her father and that she is the only heir to an estate worth ten thousand dollars. In the second letter, written a week later, she informs me how lonesome she is and says she is thinking of selling the farm and going to the city to work, as she cannot bear to live there alone."

Winnifred surveyed him from head to foot, and burst into a merry laugh. "I can't help it," she cried. "Where did you get that outlandish suit of clothes?"

"Mary's father used to be a clergyman and we found, in their attic, the make-up for Jedediah Pudley. It has

answered its purpose very well. It has supplied me with food and lodging for nearly three months and has enabled me to learn that Deacon Solomon Dalton is an unconscionable old liar, and that his sister-in-law will back up everything he says. They are a nice pair. I have summer'd 'em, but I don't want to winter 'em. Have you been able to do anything for that girl Martha?"

"Not yet," said Winnifred. Then she told him about her meeting with Joe Miggles, the death of Stub Dutcher in his heroic endeavor to save little Davy, the disappearance of Martha and her father, and the note which she had received from Joe Miggles telling her that they were safe.

"When all this works out, Winnie," said Olney, "there will be enough good stuff for a melodrama."

"I thought you were going to become a detective," said Winnifred.

"Oh, I shall use my leisure time to write plays, even if I don't act in them. I must either do that or open a school for dramatic expression. You know, actors, when out of a job, have to become either authors or teachers."

"Have you been in Snickersville all the time since the injunction case?" asked Winnifred.

"Oh, no," replied Olney, "I have been over to Renwick a number of times to see Mary, and —"

"Olney," said Winnifred, "let us be honest with each other. Do not let us *act* at this most important moment in our lives. Answer me truly. Since seeing Mary Cramer has not your old love revived? To speak frankly, would you not like to say: Winnifred Winton, I do not love you enough to make you my wife. I wish you would free me."

While she was speaking, Winnifred recalled her conversation with Mr. Merrill about actors as husbands and actresses as wives. What would he say if he could hear

the conversation now going on between her and the man, who, for two years, had professed to be her devoted lover? She was lost in thought, when Olney broke the silence.

"Well, I think you're about right, Winnie."

How was it possible for her to hear those words without a thrill of pain at her heart? Had she ever loved him? Yes, in the days gone by, she had loved him as well as she knew how to love then. But a change must have come over her — and why?

He had spoken last. With those few words he had severed the tie which she once fondly hoped was to last through life,—perhaps forever. She must reply. She had asked him to speak honestly, and he had done so. She must not be less honest.

While thinking, her eyes had been cast down. As she looked up, she said:

"Now, I have a confession to make. Perhaps I should have spoken first. But, Olney, since I have been here, I have studied my own heart. I hope that we shall always be friends, and I think we shall. I give you your freedom and you give me mine. My only wish is that I could return the beautiful ring which you gave me, but I had to sell it to get the means upon which to live this summer."

"Oh, bother the ring!" said Olney. "Keep it as coming from a friend. I'm going back to Renwick."

He again assumed the jocular manner of expression which, on or off the stage in the old days, was a second nature with him.

"When I have changed my raiment and put on habiliments suited to my future station in life as a gentleman farmer, good-bye to Jedediah Pudley. No more shall I distribute those edifying tracts, written by my intended's father — Brands from the Burning; or, The Turning Worm. Glory to faith! How do you think that character would work into a play, Winnie?"

"I never like to see the church or church people travestied upon the stage. I know that some clergymen say harsh things about our profession, but that is no reason why we should retort in kind or try to make them ridiculous."

There was a slight twinkle in Olney's eye as he remarked :

"I have been a constant attendant at the Union Church, and I have noticed that you were greatly interested in Mr. Merrill — I mean his sermons, of course."

Winnifred felt guilty, and blushed.

"If you were getting ready to go on the stage, now, Winnie, you wouldn't need any grease paint," and Winnifred grew redder than before.

"Oh, that's all right, Winnie," said Olney. "I shall never regret the good times we have had together, but we didn't understand our own hearts. We're not to blame for that. We have led an unreal life upon the stage. We have professed to hate people whom we really liked, and have made love to those who did not love us. We have been puppets on the stage. What we are playing now is our life drama, and in it we have found, as audiences do, that those who are lovers in the first act are often only friends in the last, and *vikey-verkey*, as we say in burlesque."

As Olney arose to go, Winnifred said : "I should like to see Miss Cramer."

"Mary and I will probably be married very soon, for she is lonely in that big house. I do not think you will ever have a chance to see Miss Cramer. I shall have to undergo another transformation when I am married, for she will not become Mrs. Olney Dangerfield — but Mrs. Uriel Gray."

"Good-bye, Mr. Gray," said Winnifred, as they stood at

the front door. "Remember, one of your first visits with your wife must be to see me."

Their hands met for a moment, and, taking up his grip-sack, he started on his way for Renwick, Mary Cramer, and happiness.

"Wasn't that Jedediah Pudley?"

"No, that was my friend Mr. Gray," said Winnifred. "It's the funniest story you ever heard in your life, Mandy. I'll tell you all about it some day," and she ran upstairs, for, during her absence, little Davy had got into some trouble and was crying loudly for "mama."

Winnifred took him in her arms, wiped the tears from his eyes, and soon made him forget his sorrows. Where was that mother, and when would she return to the little boy whom she loved so dearly?

CHAPTER XLII

A HOME WEDDING

MANDY wished to put off the wedding, partly on account of the tragic death of Stub Dutcher, but chiefly because Grandsire Atwood and Martha were away and she had counted on their being present.

Plum Gifford refused to listen to any such proposition. "I am as sorry for little Stub's death as you are, Mandy, but putting off our weddin' won't bring him to life, and he hasn't left any relatives to be offended. As far as Marthy goes, I don't imagine a weddin' would have any particular attraction for her, cuz it would make her think of her own."

Mandy bridled up: "Don't say a word agin Marthy. If you do, Plum Gifford, jest bear in mind—we ain't married yet."

"Heavens to Betsey!" cried Plum. "What are you tearin' on about? I only said it cuz I thought Marthy might feel sorry to see other folks so happy when she wasn't."

Plum had his way, and the wedding took place the day which had been fixed upon.

Invitations were sent far and wide. "It don't do," said Plum, "for a young married couple to start off with enemies, and we won't make any by leaving anybody out."

So nearly the whole town came to the ceremony, or dropped in before or after. The presents, though not very valuable, intrinsically, were handy, helpful, homelike, and suited to the occasion.

Among the guests were Mr. and Mrs. Amri Struthers.

Mrs. Melie Struthers brought six jars of currant jelly, which she declared was the best she had ever made. Miss Sally Winkle had Mr. Eben Wilkes for an escort, and their mutual contribution to the nuptial gifts was a bead purse with a silver ring, on which Mandy's initials were engraved.

Ri and Tri Witherspoon contributed a cape, knit from the softest pink wool. "I made it," said Ri, "and Tri gave the ribbons and the pin to fasten it with."

"Patience couldn't come; she's kinder out of sorts to-day," said Ebenezer Stark to Plum, "and I didn't bring nothin'. But if you want any carpentering done, as you most likely will, jest call on your friend Ebenezer."

Jason White, fat and puffy, and Hannah, his wife, thin as a rail, became the centre of an interested crowd to which he was descanting on the size and quality of "them pigs of mine." "Say, Plum, I've been out to your pig-gery" — then he gave a hoarse laugh — "I mean the pig-pen you're goin' to marry, and I see you haven't got but half a dozen half-grown pigs, so I'll bring you over a couple of my busters to-morrow or next day."

Red-faced Deacon Sprowle, and his equally florid wife, were profuse in their wishes of happiness for the to-be wedded pair. "I might have brought yer sugar," said the jolly Deacon, "but I thought yer'd have enough of that, so I fetched over a barrel of nice cider vinegar, and Eb Wilkes and me have jest put it into the cellar."

"I think," said Martin Van Buren Mudge, "that the giving of wedding presents is a beautiful custom. It is of ancient origin, and to reverse Shakespeare, which I do most reverently, much more honored in the observance than in the breach! As I am about to confer upon Mr. Plummer Gifford a priceless treasure — by the way, I am to give away the bride — I know he will not expect more from me."

Miss Roxana Rhodes, the school-teacher, found an opportunity to speak to Mandy. "I didn't know what to give you, so I spoke to Mr. Merrill and he has my present. It is one of those books for young wives, with a marriage certificate in the front, and I thought you wouldn't be likely to lose it."

The three gossips, Jake Clemson, Bat Mulvey, and Jeff Smith, had purchased a cake basket. It was silver-plated, resting upon four polished feet. When Mandy looked at it, the tears came into her eyes. Upon each of the feet was engraved the first name of a giver, and Mandy read, "Jake," "Bat," "Jeff," and "Stub."

Dr. Daniel Danby and his son Paul united in presenting a handsomely bound volume entitled "Guide to Etiquette."

"Paul must have picked that out," said Mandy to Winnifred. "He's always so polite."

"Yes," replied Winnifred, as she turned over the leaves of the book: "Here's a part that tells how a young gentleman should write letters to a young lady."

Old Caleb Leeds was very much fatigued when he arrived, for he had walked all the way. "I'm most ninety-five years old, said he. "If I was as young as I used to be, I'd have toted my present over on my back, but you can come over with your team to-morrow and get it. I know you haven't got an eight-day clock, and as I've got two, cuz I had two grandfathers, you can have one and welcome. It's a little out o' kilter, but all it wants is some ile and bein' wound up reg'lar. I didn't want to run both on 'em, cuz I was afraid that my time on earth would be cut in two if I did," and the old man gave a dry, squeaky laugh.

Mr. Riccadonna sent a note to Mandy in which he said that he would furnish the ice cream; and Miss Putney brought the largest jelly cake that she had ever made.

Abigail March had learned that Martha and her father had left the town, and she persuaded Deacon Dalton to accompany her. "You have our best wishes," said Abigail to Mandy. Later on she told Winnifred of Miss March's gift. "It's a great deal more than I expected. It must have cost her a heartache to give me so much."

Capt. Ezra Milliken brought his wife Thankful and his daughter Dorcas. "I left a barrel of flour out in the shed, Plum. I thought it might come in handy."

Judge Rodgers sent a letter of regret, saying that he was called to Concord on business, but while there he would find some suitable memento for the occasion. But there was no word from Abel Barnett.

Among the latest arrivals was Mr. Enoch Scales. "I suppose you're goin' on a weddin' tower, Plum — Boston, I imagine."

"We're goin' to stay right to home," said Plum.

"Wall, I don't blame you," said Enoch. "I never was in Boston but once, an' I was glad to get out of such an all-fired, crooked place. Job Walker had a lot of cattle to sell, an' I went down with him. We sold 'em an' they give us a check for 'em. Job asked where the bank was an' the man told him. Off we started down one street, up another, 'round a corner, then through an alley, not much wider'n a cow-path, an' when we come out, I said, By Jove, Job, we're back jest where we started from."

Mr. Scales went in search of the coming bride. "Say, Mandy, I've got somethin' nice for you." He took off half a dozen papers in which the article was wrapped, but before removing the last one said: "Tildy told me she'd never use that new tooth-brush, so I brought it over for you."

"Why!" exclaimed Winnifred, "how could you part with that, Mr. Scales? You're giving away your best chance of getting a wife."

The ceremony had been fixed for eight o'clock, but it still lacked an hour of time. Bridal couples are seldom punctual, so there was really a further margin to spare. It was time, however, for the principal characters in the event to dress. Ri and Tri Witherspoon had volunteered to assist Mandy; but Winnifred had declined a similar offer from Sally Winkle.

Winnifred had sent to Concord for some white muslin, and she had made the dress herself. With a pink rose in her glossy dark hair, and with her laughing brown eyes looking down at a bunch of roses which she had artistically fastened in her corsage, she made a very pretty and most inviting picture as she came down-stairs and held out her hand to Mr. Scales, who was to be Plum's best man.

"Oh, Mr. Scales," she cried, "you look simply elegant. That's a stunning suit."

"'Tain't overly slow, is it? These are the clothes Uncle Ezra was married in. They was goin' to lay him out in 'em, but I wouldn't let 'em. The idee o' buryin' up a suit of clothes like this in the cold grave!" He took Winnifred's hand and kissed it with a loud smack. "I've got a picter book to home where a man is kissin' a gal's hand jest that way. I wanted to see how it felt. Will you be mad if I say somethin'?"

"Well — no, of course not."

"I may blush when I'm sayin' it, but you needn't mind. There's somethin' wrong with that gearin' o' yours. Yer gown is droppin' off."

"Oh, no, it's all right."

"No, 'tain't nuther; don't yer see it there? That tail-piece is draggin' more'n four foot on the ground."

Winnifred caught at her skirt and gave it a swish: "Why, it's a train, made that way."

"Made that way a purpose?" cried Enoch. "Well,

it's a sin ; there's a lot of it that yer ain't gettin' a mite of good of. Say, I'd kinder like to kiss yer hand again."

Winnifred drew back : "Oh, no, Mr. Scales, I think once will have to do."

"I'd like to. It's like drinkin' stone fence ; the more yer have, the more yer want."

"But over-indulgence in either, Mr. Scales, is dangerous."

Enoch changed the subject : "Have yer thought any more 'bout that openin' over to my place?"

"Oh, Mr. Scales, I've tried so hard, but I can't learn to milk."

"Well, if yer can't milk, I don't want yer. Yer see, I've got ten cows, an' the heft o' the work is milkin'."

"I'm sorry I'm so stupid, but I couldn't think of it, anyway, now that you've given that new tooth-brush to Mandy. Abigail is the one you want."

"I can't egzactly say I want her, but she's like the measles ; mebbe I've got to have her."

Plum's dressing-room was a small bedroom that led off from the kitchen. There was also a door which opened into the entry where Mr. Scales and Winnifred were standing.

Plum opened the door which led into the entry, and seeing Enoch, cried out : "Look here, Enoch, what do you think. I gave Anse Pelby's old-maid sister two dollars and three bushels of pink-eyed beans to make this coat and vest to get married in. Here, it's time for the weddin' and the old squint-eyed skeesicks has forgot to put any buttonholes in the vest."

Winnifred's attention was attracted : "Why, Plum you can button up the coat right over the vest."

"So I can. By George, there ain't no buttonholes in the coat, nuther."

"Now, don't get discouraged," said Winnifred. "I can pin the coat and it will be all right."

While Winnifred was performing her self-imposed task, Plum said: "I look nice, don't I, gettin' married all pinned up. You might have tied me like a turkey, all ready for roastin'."

"There, you look all right now, only you must breathe very lightly," said Winnifred.

"Breathe light!" cried Plum. "I feel now like a bale of straw with the ends busted. Where's them gloves?" He finally extracted them from his pantaloons pocket.

"Where did you get the gloves?" asked Winnifred.

"They're all right. Aunt Hannah Mugford made them for me a purpose."

Winnifred examined them: "Why, there are only three fingers on one of them."

"Well, don't that beat the Dutch!" cried Plum. "But I see how it came about. She used to knit gloves for my father, and he lost a finger in a corn-cutter, and she's so absent-minded."

"Carry that one in your hand," said Winnifred. "That's the way they do in the city. Besides, you'd have to take it off anyway, to put on the ring. Are you all ready now, Plum?"

"All right if I hang together and breathe light."

Winnifred now felt that the time had come for her to act as mistress of ceremonies. "You two go upstairs and stay in my room until we come for you. I must find Mr. Mudge and have him get the people into the sitting-room."

She discovered Mr. Mudge in the pantry eating some bread and cheese.

"I live so far away, I had to leave home without my supper," said he, apologetically. "This is a trying ordeal for an unmarried man, and I felt as though an addition to my physical strength was absolutely necessary."

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Mudge. As soon as you've finished your lunch, please get the folks into the sitting-room and find seats for them."

When she reached the entry, there was a ring at the bell. She opened the door and admitted the Rev. Mr. Merrill, who looked at her admiringly.

"Do I behold the bride?" he asked.

"Oh, no, only the bridesmaid."

"It is but a step from one to the other," he replied, smilingly.

"That is true," said Winnifred, "but such a step once taken is hard to retrace."

By this time they had reached the door of the sitting-room. There was no need of an introduction, for he was known to all there; so Winnifred excused herself and went upstairs to see if Mandy's maids had completed their task.

Winnifred had not intended, in the first place, to wear muslin. She had a beautiful white silk dress among her costumes, but she decided that such a dress should be worn by the bride rather than by the bridesmaid. So she prevailed upon Mandy to allow her to make some alterations, and further, to accept the dress as a wedding present.

"How do I look?" cried Mandy, as Winnifred entered the room.

"Charming. I think your two friends have shown great taste in arranging those roses."

"I think she ought to have some orange blossoms," said Ri.

"So do I," agreed Tri.

"Oh, nonsense," cried Mandy. "I think white roses are a great deal prettier. Besides, I don't like oranges, anyway. Really, now, do I look all right? I hope I won't have hysterics."

"I brought my smelling-salts," said Ri. "If you feel faint-like, jest take a good big sniff. Tri and I both do when we go to Friday evening meeting."

"I must ask you to wait a few minutes," said Winnifred. "Davy is asleep in his mother's room, but he must not miss the wedding."

"Where's Plum?" asked Mandy.

"Oh, I've put Mr. Gifford and Mr. Scales in my room, with instructions to remain there until called for," said Winnifred.

When she returned with little Davy, the three young ladies cried out: "How pretty! What a surprise! What made you think of it?"

Winnifred had found, in one of her trunks, a blue velvet cape. From it she had constructed a jacket and a pair of knee-breeches. She had obtained from Concord a pair of shoe-buckles, socks, and the material for a ruffled blouse. Davy's flaxen hair hung down his neck in ringlets. He was rubbing his eyes with one hand, while the other held a small basket filled with red and white roses and pinks, all resting upon a bed of fresh green leaves and festooned about with smilax.

"He is to be our little flower boy," cried Winnifred. "Now, I will summon the groom and the best man."

"Come, Ri," said Tri. "We're sorry to miss the wedding, but everybody will be so hungry as soon as it's over, and we shan't have any too much time to get supper ready."

They had just left the room when Winnifred appeared, accompanied by Plum and Mr. Scales.

"Enoch," said Mandy, "you must give Miss Winton your arm."

"What for?"

"Ye got to," said Plum.

"I won't do it. Think I'm goin' to parade in thar hangin' on to a gal's arm? We can jest as well march in Injun file, one behind t'other."

Little Davy went first, with the basket of flowers, followed by Plum and Mandy.

"Mr. Scales, please give me your arm," said Winnifred as they reached the top of the stairs.

"I don't want ter. Ye'll swish that tail-piece 'round me an' I won't find my feet for a week."

Winnifred grasped Enoch's arm.

"I offered yer myself once and yer wouldn't take me," he remarked. "I don't see why Plum didn't get a younger feller for best man."

"I insisted upon a middle-aged gentleman," said Winnifred.

"I kinder guess," said Enoch, "that yer beginnin' to realize that yer made a mistake when I proposed to yer up in my barn."

By this time he had reached the door of the sitting-room, and Miss Roxana Rhodes, who had been waiting impatiently for the appearance of the bridal pair, unfortunately dropped her eye-glasses, just at the critical moment, and did not regain them until the bridal party had reached their places before the minister, where they were obliged to stand until Miss Rhodes had played through four pages of a wedding march which she had ordered from Boston for the occasion.

The ceremony was short and simple, but before it was over, Mr. Scales made a bolt for the door. Eben Wilkes followed him into the entry.

"What the matter?" asked Eben. "Come back."

"No, I won't. Do you think I'm goin' to stand thar like a gump to be snickered at?"

"You must come," cried Eben.

"I won't. I've stepped on that tail-piece three times a'ready. Fust thing I know, she'll be handin' in a bill for damages."

"They warn't laffin' at you," said Eben.

"Yes, they was, tew. When the Elder said jine hands, I was watchin' that dumb tail-piece an' I got flustrated an' grabbed Mandy's hand. That's when they snickered. I wouldn't go back for a farm down East."

No sooner had Parson Merrill declared Plum and Mandy man and wife, than a good old country custom was followed. All pressed forward to congratulate and kiss the bride, and none of the maidens present were able to escape from Plum's osculations. Seeing Miss March standing in the doorway, Plum ran towards her. Divining his purpose, she gave a loud scream, ran up the front stairs, and did not appear again until they were all seated at the supper table.

Miss Putney's immense jelly cake occupied the place of honor in the centre of the table, while around it were arranged hearty comestibles and toothsome dainties.

When supper was over, Plum called out: "Ladies and gentlemen, there'll be a wait of about half an hour, till we get the kitchen cleared up ready for the dance. Mr. Scales will officiate on the violin and call for us, and Wallace Harvey is comin' over from Willoughby to bring his cornet. When we get warmed up dancin', we'll have some ice cream and lemonade."

This announcement was greeted with applause, particularly by the young members of the party. But nearly all of the company sought the sitting-room, piazza, or garden.

As Winnifred stepped out upon the piazza, she saw that the moon was shining brightly. She walked slowly down the path that led to the road. When she reached the gate, she leaned upon it, and thought how pleasant a



A COUNTRY WEDDING.

cool, quiet evening in the open air was, after the bustle and confusion from which she had just escaped.

She heard footsteps behind her, and turning, saw Mr. Merrill approaching.

"You made a charming bridesmaid."

"Why!" exclaimed Winnifred; "is not that an excessive compliment to come from the officiating clergyman?"

"I have been taught that it is a clergyman's duty to speak the truth at all times."

Winnifred laughed. "Hollow, hollow flattery, Mr. Merrill."

Changing the subject abruptly, he remarked: "You are going away soon, I suppose?"

"Yes, soon, but not until Martha comes back. I have to be a mother to little Davy, you know."

"Do you love little children?"

"Some of them — sometimes — when I'm in the mood."

"You will leave many here who will miss you."

"Do you mean Abby and Deacon Solomon?"

"No — some who have learned to love you."

"Oh, yes; Mandy, and Davy, and Martha."

"And one other," said Mr. Merrill, impressively.

"Certainly, you teach a religion that commands love to all, so of course, Abigail and I are included. But you are not looking at that beautiful moon, Mr. Merrill."

"No, I am looking at you."

"Admiring my gown?"

"Admiring the wearer."

"An actress? Remember, we have talked this over before."

"A maiden."

"And you a minister?"

"A man — only a man; a man admiring a maid."

Winnifred's eyes dropped. "An old, old story."

"Very old and sweet," said he, as he took her unresisting hand in his.

"Our professions — so far apart —" and she withdrew her hand.

"Not so far apart in these days."

She turned away from him: "An eternity between them in this place."

"This is a very small place."

Winnifred faced him quickly: "And very moral. What if it were known that its popular young minister candidly confesses his admiration for an actress? An actress beneath the ban of the law," she added, somewhat bitterly.

"My position in society and not my inclination forced me to act as I did."

"I accept your apology. From that point of view your course was excusable."

"I did not know you then. I saw only the actress, but I have since learned to know the woman and admire her. Oh, Winnifred, it is with me far more than admiration. I love you, I love you!"

He attempted to take her hand again, but she drew back! "You've told me this before."

"And when I did, you said that your heart was garrisoned. Tell me truly, Winnifred, is it as well defended as it was two months ago?"

A single word came falteringly from her lips: "No."

At that moment the notes of a cornet were heard, followed by the strains from a violin. "The dance!" she exclaimed. "I'm going in."

He grasped her hand and held it firmly within his own. "Are you going alone? Shall I remain here and regard the moon, or may I go with you and look upon another of God's creations which, in my eyes, is far more beautiful — the woman I love?"



WINNIFRED AND REV. FRANKLIN MERRILL

"You may come with me," she said, softly.

When the dancing was over, Abigail asked Enoch :
"Where's the Deacon ?"

"Oh, he went off soon as he got his supper. Don't worry, Abby, I'll see yer hum."

"It was quite a long distance from Mrs. Gifford's house to Deacon Dalton's, but conversation did not flag between Mr. Scales and Miss March.

"Have you any idee of swappin' that hoss of yours ?" he asked.

"No, I ain't."

"I've got a yoke o' steers, two years old, that I'll trade yer, an' I'll throw in a couple o' pigs."

"No, we don't keep pigs."

"I'll put in that feather bed Uncle Ezra died on, then. What do yer say ?"

"I wouldn't trade my hoss for all the old truck yer've got on yer place."

"Do you count me in with the old truck ?"

"Well, no, not exactly."

Enoch was overcome by the novelty and romance of the situation. He glanced sidewise at his companion. "Yer lookin' real nice to-night, Abby."

"I never saw you lookin' better, Mr. Scales. I love to go to weddin's."

"I was never so close to one before. I've been thinkin' o' gettin' married myself, but I'm so bashful I'd rather die than ask anybody."

"I don't think I'd feel that way if I was a man."

This encouragement came when it was most needed.

"Now take a man that owns his own farm and a lot o' pigs, an' is all right, no gamblers, an' sings every Sunday in the meetin' house, what would yer think of havin' him for a husband ?"

Miss March simpered : " Such a man would be jest my idee."

" I've got somethin' I was thinkin' on tellin' ye, Abby."

Abby took his arm : " Yes," she said, as sweetly as she could.

" 'Bout you," he added.

Another soft " Yes."

" Us two."

" Yes," and she clung still closer to his strong arm.

" I'll tell yer sometime."

Abby stepped upon a rolling stone and slipped. She would have fallen if Enoch had not caught her in his arms.

Many a wiser man has succumbed under such circumstances. As she regained her feet, he said : " I'll tell yer now, Abby. The fact is, Tildy's down again on her back as flat as a flounder, an' I'm most tuckered out doin' everything myself. I've 'bout made up my mind to sell my place, put Tildy out to board, an' go out West, an' I shall, sure as fate, unless I get married."

" Don't go, Enoch," pleaded Abby.

" Wall, I'll tell yer what I'll do," said Enoch. " If you'll bring with yer everything that belongs to yer, hoss an' all, I'll marry ye a month from to-night. We won't have Elder Merrill. He expects too much. Squire Rodgers will hitch us up for fifty cents. Money saved is money earned, is my maxim."

Deacon Dalton was sitting up, awaiting his sister-in-law's return ; as he locked the door, he said : " I don't like the idea of your staying out so late nights."

" First time for three years," she retorted. " But you won't be troubled with me much longer. You know, I told you I was goin' to get married."

" I don't believe it. There's nobody in the town that would have you."

"You've been glad enough to have me do all your work for my board and clothes — and mighty poor ones, too. You're no judge of women, but I've found a man that is. One month from to-night, I become Mrs. Enoch Scales."

Saying this triumphantly, she lighted her lamp and went upstairs to have one of those roseate dreams that come alike to young maids and old.

CHAPTER XLIII

A FORTUNE IN COPPER

WHEN Plum and Mandy came down-stairs the next morning after the wedding and looked about, he said that it reminded him of a circus, and she declared that it would take a month of Sundays to put the house to rights.

When Davy did not require her attention, Winnifred assisted the happy young couple, and, when they sat down to supper, Mandy gave a sigh of relief that everything was spick and span again.

In the evening as they sat upon the piazza, Winnifred referred to the subject which was uppermost in my mind :

"I think, Mandy, that I shall take little Davy, to-morrow morning, and go to Mr. Riccadonna's to board until Martha comes back. It isn't fair that you should have so much extra work to do during your honeymoon."

"You must be gettin' tired of us," said Plum. "I guess it's because I'm here. I think I'll go home for a week and leave you two girls together."

"I guess you won't," said Mandy, "nor Miss Winton, either. There's no reason at all why you should not stay until Martha comes back, and as for little Davy, I love to have him here ; so you just consider it settled that you are to stay right where you are. Of course, when you are freed from the care of little Davy, you will be going —"

"Yes," said Winnifred, breaking in, "as soon as I can I shall go to —" she was going to say New York, but the thought came to her that her future might be changed in some unexpected way, and she added, "somewhere."

The next morning, as Winnifred sat looking out of the

sitting-room window, she saw Eben Wilkes coming up the road. As he caught sight of her, he beckoned and she went out on the piazza to meet him.

"Anything new, Eben?"

"Oh, yes. As I was comin' by Riccadonna's, he called me in and asked me if you was here. I said you was night before last and he told me to tell you that you would have some visitors this mornin'; so I guess you had better go upstairs and prink up."

"Who is it?" she asked.

"Oh, there's more'n one, but I'm under bonds not to tell. It's goin' to be a great surprise for yer."

From past experience, Winnifred knew that it was impossible to glean any information from Eben if he was not disposed to speak.

"How did you enjoy the wedding, Eben?"

"Oh, fine. There's nothing like it. Sally and me was out in the garden behind that big tree over there, and judgin' from what I saw goin' on down by the gate, I should not be surprised if there was another weddin' before long."

Winnifred felt the color mounting to her cheeks, but Eben did not remain to see the result of his words.

"I can't stay any longer," he cried; "I'm late, and if Barnett gets there before me, he'll make a fuss about it."

Winnifred thought it best to profit by the timely warning, so she went upstairs and put on the dress which she had worn the night of the wedding. In the garden she found some rosebuds to complete her toilet. Then she went into the sitting-room, opened the piano, and involuntarily sang "The Old Chimney Corner." She remembered that night at Riccadonna's when, gathered about the open fireplace, they had last sung the song. Then she had just come to Snickersville, and what a change had

taken place in her life in a few short months. Was this singing of the song a premonition that she was soon to leave the place — and what was her future life to be?

For a while Winnifred sat at the piano, idly fingering the keys which sent forth no melody, only a succession of harmonic sounds. She took up a book and tried to read. It did not interest her, and she put it back upon the table. Next, she went to the window and looked out. They must come by way of the road. They should not surprise her, for she would know who they were before they entered the house.

There was a rattle of wheels, and the most stylish equipage in Mr. Riccadonna's stable was drawn up before the gate. In spite of her determination not to be surprised, she did give a low cry of astonishment, for from the vehicle alighted Col. J. Orlando Hix, Miss Rosa Cholmondeley, and Mr. Leander Thoroughbrace.

Winnifred ran to the door to meet them. She was delighted to see old friends once more, even if their past relations had not been of the most pleasant description.

"Why, Colonel Hix," she exclaimed, "what has brought you to this out of the way place?"

"The usual means of conveyance — the steam railway. I could not have undertaken this trip if the means of locomotion had not been speedy."

Winnifred embraced Rosa, and they kissed each other. "I am so pleased to see you, Miss Cholmondeley."

"She has changed her name again," said the Colonel, "at my earnest solicitation. Allow me the pleasure of introducing to you Mrs. J. Orlando Hix."

"Accept my congratulations," said Winnifred. "And now, Mr. Thoroughbrace, I suppose you are glad to be at home once more."

"When I got there last night and saw my wife Abby,

you bet I was glad. But I promised the Colonel to come down to the hotel this morning early, so I did."

By this time all were seated in the sitting-room.

The Colonel evidently thought that Miss Winton expected some explanation of his failure to join the company at Snickersville.

"I have told Mrs. Hix and my friend Thoroughbrace about my doings for the past three months and, as you are one of my involuntary creditors, I presume you would like to know what I have been up to."

"My curiosity is unbounded."

"Well, I had to let the company close its season here because I had financial interests which I considered a great deal more important. You see, I could not afford to let the money which my friend the Major, here, had invested in the business, remain in the bank not drawing any interest, so I took it out and invested it, temporarily of course, in copper stock."

"I have heard of such things before," remarked Winifred.

"Oh, yes," said the Colonel, jauntily, "such investments are made daily by persons who have money on hand that is unproductive. Well, about the time I agreed to come to Snickersville, the Consolidated Copper Company was formed, and my shares took a big jump upward. The question was whether I should stay in New York and watch my great financial interests, or come to look after the fortunes of a company which had been losing money every day since it took to the road. My decision, I think, was a wise one, for my five thousand dollars soon doubled and, inside of a month, had grown tenfold. I have paid all my bills in New York, have settled with Mr. Thoroughbrace, and given him a good return on his investment, and I think he is perfectly satisfied."

"I shall be glad," said Mr. Thoroughbrace, "when I find the person that money belongs to. You see, I was left executor, and the money I put into the show I invested the same as Colonel Hix did, so that it would be making money. Thank Fortune, I've got it all back again, and more too, but I shan't rest easy nights 'til I find the young man that some of the money belongs to."

There was another rumble of wheel, then a voice cried : "Whoa !" and the front gate was heard creaking upon its hinges.

"I wonder if I am to have another surprise," thought Winnifred, but politeness prevented her from answering the bell.

Judging from their greeting, the sound of which was heard even through the closed door of the sitting-room, the new arrivals were well known to Mandy. She, regardless of the fact that Winnifred was entertaining visitors, threw open the sitting-room door and ushered in Grandsire Atwood, Martha, and a fine-looking young man.

Without noticing the presence of those about her, Martha threw herself into Winnifred's arms.

"Oh, I am so happy," she cried. "Oh, Miss Winton, you will be so glad when you learn of my good fortune. This is my husband, Mr. David Dalton, who was dead, but is alive again."

"David Dalton !" cried Mr. Thoroughbrace, starting up from the rocking-chair in which he had been sitting. "That letter that you sent to Laconia came down here to Snickersville to my wife, but I've been away for a while and I didn't git home 'til last night, and of course I couldn't send you the money. Besides, I didn't know where to send it, for I didn't s'pose you had been stoppin' out in that place ever since you writ it."

"Oh, that's all right, Leander," said David. "If you

had sent me the money, it would have been a great convenience, but I managed to get along without it."

"Pardon me," said Winnifred, and she proceeded to introduce the newcomers to Colonel and Mrs. Hix.

As the Colonel and David shook hands, the latter remarked: "I think I have had the pleasure of meeting this gentleman before."

The Colonel regarded him: "I do not remember you, sir, but, of course, a man in my position is known to a great many whom it is impossible for him to recognize, by name, at least."

"I think," said David, "I can recall a circumstance which will assist your memory."

He took a wallet from his pocket and from it extracted a soiled envelope. This he opened. It contained a bit of crumpled paper, which he spread out upon the table and then passed to the Colonel.

"Ah," said the Colonel, "my young friend on the train coming from Chicago. Why, certainly! My I. O. U. for twenty-five dollars. Well, we parted very suddenly a short time afterwards. The check never came into my bank and I thought, perhaps, you were a victim of the accident."

"Oh, no," said David, "when I loaned you the money I had plenty of it. When I had none, I was afraid to show the check for fear it would be thought that I had stolen it, and, besides, I have not been within a hundred miles of New York City."

The Colonel took a roll of bills from his pocket, selected three and passed them to David.

"I always honor my checks as soon as presented, especially in the case of a debt of honor. At the time I requested the loan, I was suffering from temporary financial inconvenience. If the amount were not so small, I should feel inclined to add interest."

David turned to Winnifred.

"I have a long story to tell," he said, "and if I shall not impose too much upon your kindness or that of your friends here, I should like to tell it now."

All present expressed both a willingness and a desire to hear what he had to say. As briefly as possible, he recounted his adventures in the West and the way in which he had become the owner of Dalton's Mines in Dolby City. He concealed nothing of his relations with Mrs. Harrison Goss and the tragic event with which he had been connected.

"Although my father had written me that my wife was dead, I did not believe it; and yet, there were times when I could not think it possible that my father who, so far as I knew, had always led an honorable life, and was a member of the church, could write down so terrible a falsehood. I resolved to come East to make sure, hoping for the best, yet fearing the worst."

"After the accident, I wrote to Mr. Thoroughbrace, but, getting no reply, started East on foot. When I reached Syracuse, I got some employment for a while. From there, I wrote to a friend in Altamont, a town which adjoins Dolby City, asking him to go over to Dalton's Mines and write me the condition of affairs there. He said in his letter that Mrs. Goss was carrying things with a high hand, for she had enlarged and refurnished my house and raised money to increase the mine workings. But what interested me most was to learn that she had told everybody in Dolby City that I had killed Hardy Crump because I was jealous of him; that she did not love me and had only married me to save me from the penalty of the law — a law which I had myself made — that every man who committed murder in Dolby City should be tried at once, and if found guilty should be hanged."

His listeners were greatly interested in his story.

"There is good material in that for a melodrama," said the Colonel. "If you have no objections, I will have a young dramatist in New York work it up into a play — suppressing real names, of course."

"I prefer," said David, "that what I have told you should not be repeated outside of this room."

"Oh, as you please," said the Colonel. "There's not much money in melodrama, nowadays, anyway. I think burlesque is to have a new lease of life, and I propose to stick to it."

David resumed his story :

"I will not try to tell you my experiences as a tramp, but I can assure you that I shall never forget them. From this day on, I shall have a heart full of sympathy for the poor social outcast who is forced to tramp over dusty roads, beg or steal his food, sleep in barns, out-buildings, or, more often, the open air — and all the time be forced to fight that most terrible enemy of the hobo — the house-dog."

"I had a very laughable experience once with a dog in a play," the Colonel broke in. "When we wanted him to go on the stage we had to haul him on, and when we wanted him to come off, we had to pull him off. They don't know so much as pigs. When I was young in the business, I had a pig show, and that animal was the most intelligent one I ever met in my life. But I struck some poor show towns and had to sell him to the butcher."

"The dog or the pig?" asked Winnifred; and all laughed.

"The day I arrived in Snickersville," David continued, "I met this young lady" — and, as he spoke, he turned once more and looked at Winnifred — "although at that time I answered to the rather unassuming name of Joe Miggles."

"Oh, why didn't I know you?" cried Winnifred.

"Well, I hardly knew myself," said David. "You can imagine how happy I was when I learned that Martha was still living and that you were her guardian angel. I lost no time in making my way to Burlow, where Martha and I were married, and obtained a duplicate of the marriage certificate. I had heard that Martha had been suffering from mental trouble and I was afraid to come forward and declare my identity. I waited for some opportunity to come which would enable me to tell her who I was without causing too great a shock to her nervous system. I had heard that joy sometimes kills.

"Fortune favored me. The day that Martha, thinking our little boy had been killed, wandered away from home, followed by her father, I found them prostrate by the roadside. Again fortune favored me, for a young man came along with an empty wagon, and I promised him five dollars to take us to Burlow. I had to borrow the money from the clergyman to pay him.

"A few days later I called upon Mr. Abel Barnett and we had a very interesting interview. He had just returned from Dolby City with the money which Mrs. Goss had paid him for the proof of Martha's marriage. I showed him a copy of the certificate, and he wrote a letter to Mrs. Goss at my dictation. Of one thing, however, I am sure — Mr. Barnett gave me the proceeds of his villainy."

"Don't you think it strange that I have been so patient?" Martha asked of Winnifred. "I haven't said a word about little Davy. But I am so anxious to see him and press him to my heart again. When I was getting better over to Burlow, I didn't worry about him at all. I knew that you would give him a mother's care, and when I came in, Mandy whispered in my ear that he was all right. I wanted to hear David tell his story again, but I

can't wait any longer. Come, I must go and see him. Come, father, you know you want to see little Davy as much as I do."

"A very remarkable story of yours, Mr. Dalton," said the Colonel, "and I think the public will be a loser by not having it put into dramatic form; but, of course, private feelings must be respected."

"Here is your papa," said Martha, as she entered the room, leading little Davy by the hand, and followed by Winnifred, Mandy, and Grandsire Atwood, who were all anxious to behold the first meeting between the father and the little boy whom he had never seen. Little Davy drew back in childish fear, and it was some time before Martha could convince him that the strange man with dark hair and moustache and sun-burned face was his father, and that he had come home to live with them.

"Well," said Mr. Thoroughbrace, "I thought you and I, Colonel, had some pretty interestin' times, but what David's been through beats us all holler."

"Now, Martha," said David, "I want you to come with me, and bring little Davy. I am going to call on my father. He should be one of the first in town to know that I am living, that you have a right to bear the name of Dalton, and that I am little Davy's father."

After David, accompanied by his wife and child, had gone to make the filial call, Mandy said:

"Come, Grandsir', your house is all fixed up, ready for you to move in. I've got some work to do out in the kitchen, but you can sit down with me and I'll tell you all about it."

"I should like to look at your farm, Mrs. Gifford," said Mrs. Hix. "Would you believe it, I never was on a farm in my life."

"Come right along," said Mandy. "I'll show you the

farm and I can talk to Grandsir' Atwood by and by. Besides, he can tell you more about the farm than I can."

When they were left alone, Winnifred said: "What are you going to do next season, Colonel?"

"Oh, I'm going to stick to the same old business. Once in the dramatic traces, its like malaria — very hard to get rid of and sure to come back again. I'm going to put on Allurio and Adelina in grand style — a big ballet and forty vaudeville artists. I'm going to have a grand production — the finest scenery that has ever been shown in a burlesque in this country, and that's saying a good deal, for Jim Fiske was a pretty good hand at it. Mrs. Hix will play Adelina and, of course, I can count upon you for Allurio."

"I am afraid not," said Winnifred. "I have had so many losses in the profession that I'm thinking of making a change."

There was an expression on Winnifred's face which spoke louder than words.

"Ah, I remember. What was the amount of our little running account?"

"I loaned you one hundred dollars," said Winnifred.

The Colonel took out his roll of bills. After counting and recounting, he handed some of them to Winnifred.

"Take those, Miss Winton. There are five hundred dollars — one hundred for the amount of your loan and the balance for back salary and interest. I saw Miss Dumas-resque and Sid Steele in New York and fixed them up all right. By the way, do you know where Olney Dangerfield is? After I settle with him, my long schedule of indebtedness will be cancelled. There's nothing gives me so much enjoyment as paying bills — when I have the money."

They had been so busily engaged in conversation that they had not noticed the arrival of another carriage. The

ring at the door-bell caused Winnifred to start up and exclaim :

"Why, this is the most wonderful day I ever passed in my life. Here are more visitors. I wonder who has come now."

Knowing that Mandy was busy in the kitchen, Winnifred went to the door. There stood Mr. Dangerfield with a very pretty country girl.

"You could not have come at a better time, Mr. Dangerfield," said Winnie. "Some old friends of yours are here."

As they entered the room, both the Colonel and Mr. Thoroughbrace sprang forward to meet him.

"Why, Dangerfield, my dear boy, this is an unexpected pleasure," cried the Colonel. "Where did you drop from?"

"Oh, I thought I would come over from Renwick, that's the next town, and introduce my wife to Miss Winton."

The Colonel bowed: "Mrs. Dangerfield, I am honored.

"Wait a moment," said Olney. "Things are getting tangled up here. Olney Dangerfield is my stage name. This is my wife, but she is not Mrs. Dangerfield. I will relieve your suspense and take pleasure in introducing to you all Mr. and Mrs. Uriel Gray."

"Uriel Gray!" screamed Mr. Thoroughbrace. "Are you the son of Uriel Gray over to Renwick, who died in Laconia about a year ago?"

"I am that individual," said Olney. "I was out West at the time. They telegraphed me from home, but I could not get away."

"Well, you're the man I've been lookin' for," said Mr. Thoroughbrace. "Your father made me his executor, and I've been totin' 'round seventy-five hundred dollars that belongs to you. It's safe, all safe, for I've got a New

York draft up to the house, and I'll be glad to turn it over to you as soon as possible."

"Your legacy has been the foundation of three fortunes, my dear Olney," said the Colonel. "I can't call you by any other name right off. Mr. Thoroughbrace invested your money in the theatrical business; I put it into copper stock, and it boomed up, and we've all got back what belongs to us and more too."

"You were always lucky, Colonel," said Mr. Gray.

The Colonel went on: "It's been mighty fortunate for some people that the company got stranded here. Miss Winton has been the means of bringing together a young couple that have long been separated, and, if I am able to judge from appearances, some people have changed their minds, and one of them to a very marked extent. The young lady hasn't told me what she proposes to do, but I presume she will before we go away; eh, Miss Winton?"

Winnifred felt the telltale color coming to her cheeks, but she warded off the attack.

"The Colonel hasn't told you, has he, Olney, that he is married to Miss Cholmondeley? She's gone to look over the farm with Mandy. You remember Mandy, Mr. Pudley?"

"Oh, Mary knows all about Mr. Pudley. It's too long a story to explain to the Colonel now."

"Well, I must be going," said Mr. Thoroughbrace. "Abby's goin' to get up a fust-rate dinner for me, and I shan't feel as though I was to home 'til I set down at my own table and eat in my own way. No more stand-up free lunches for me."

"Where is Mr. Dodd?" asked Winnifred.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you," said Mr. Thoroughbrace, "he's in New York now, fixing up some business matters. He's comin' up here in a little while. I'm goin' up to

Laconia. I'm goin' to buy another hotel and he's goin' in with me. I'm goin' to have him for my clerk."

"Well, I must be moving," said the Colonel, "as soon as I can find that wife of mine. I am going up to the Town Hall to see about the scenery and properties belonging to our show. Mr. Thoroughbrace says that there was money enough to pay the bills here, but I suppose they will charge me for storage. By the way, I'm not going away until tomorrow, and I've made arrangements with Bob Brady, I mean Mr. Riccadonna, to get up a fine supper for to-night to which you are all invited, including all your friends. We may never meet together again, and I wish to drink the health of all of you and have you drink mine in return."

After they were gone, Winnifred went in search of Mandy.

"What a morning we have had."

"I never saw anything like it," was Mandy's reply. "It could not have come out better if it had been written in a book, could it?"

"Where's Grandsire?" asked Winnifred.

"Oh, he's out in the barn, sharpening a sickle. He says he hasn't had anything to do for three weeks and he's all tired out."

Winnifred went in search of him, led him back to the sitting-room, and placed him in his favorite arm-chair. Then she went to the piano and sang one of the old-time songs which she knew he loved. As the last words of the song fell from her lips, there was another ring at the door-bell. Grandsire Atwood was sound asleep, with a happy, contented look upon his face. David Dalton had returned with Martha and little Davy.

"I saw father and Abigail," he said. "She is going to marry Enoch Scales in less than a month, and father will be left alone. He is feeling very badly at the prospect,

and when I saw his white hair and wrinkled face, I did not have the heart to reproach him very severely for the cruel wrong that he had done to Martha and me. All I could bring myself to say was that this would be our last meeting on earth. When I leave Snickersville with my wife and child" — he looked towards Grandsire Atwood — "of course I shall take him — I shall hope never to see this place again. I think, although he is my father, that he deserves to be punished for what he has done, but I shall leave it to his own conscience to mete it out to him."

"I think you have done right, Mr. Dalton," said Winnifred.

"I did not feel revengeful when we went to him," said David, "but I was determined he should see and know that Martha was my true and lawful wife, and, before I leave the town, everybody else shall know it, too. I am sure the news will spread, for we went to see Mr. Barnett. Of course he did not recognize me, but when I whispered in his ear that I was Joe Miggles — when I was Joe Miggles I told him that I was David Dalton — he was obliged to acknowledge his previous acquaintance, and when I introduced Martha as Mrs. David Dalton, he expressed himself as being very glad to see her. Time works wonders, does it not, Miss Winton?"

"I never expected to be connected with such a miraculous series of events," she said.

"But here is the most wonderful thing of all," said David, as he took a newspaper from his pocket. "We met another old friend, Mr. Enoch Scales. When I told him who I was he said that he had a newspaper up to his house for Mr. David Dalton, but he thought it must have been sent by mistake, for he had not heard that I was in town."

"And what is in the paper?" asked Winnifred, her curiosity excited.

"The result of Mr. Barnett's letter to Mrs. Goss. I am full of pity for her sad fate, for she had some good traits."

"Why, what has happened?" cried Winnifred.

"She was found dead in her bed. She committed suicide. She left behind a written statement in which she confessed that she killed Hardy Crump, and absolves me from all connection with the crime. I am grateful to her for that, for I should have felt uncomfortable to go back to Dolby City with the remembrance of that affair hanging over me. My friend Woods sent the paper to me from Altamont. Take it and read it."

"I am very glad," said Winnifred, as she kissed Martha, "that everything has turned out so happily."

Then she caught little Davy up in her arms. "You don't know how happy you ought to be, Davy, that kind Heaven has sent you a father, but your mother will tell you the story one of these days."

"We shall remain here for a short time," said Mr. Dalton. "We shall have to sell father Atwood's place. Then we will go West to claim our fortune—which is to be our little boy's heritage."

"I trust we shall make good use of it, David," said Martha, "but our little boy's good name is worth more than money, and Davy's father is the greatest good fortune that could ever come to him."

CHAPTER XLIV

"A GOOD ENDING"

THE farewell dinner at Riccadonna's was a great success. Colonel Hix sat at the head of the table; at his right was Miss Winton, the honored guest of the occasion, while Mrs. Hix was at his left. Besides, there were present Mr. and Mrs. David Dalton, Mr. and Mrs. Plummer Gifford, Mr. and Mrs. Uriel Gray, and Mr. and Mrs. Leander Thoroughbrace.

Miss Sally Winkle had volunteered to take care of little Davy, and Mr. Eben Wilkes had felt it incumbent upon him to stay at the Harkins house and look out for both of them until the guests had returned from the dinner.

Mr. Riccadonna had outdone himself. Never had his tables groaned beneath such a weight of luxuries. The Colonel was in his happiest mood. He was a good liver, and the sight of a well prepared meal sent joy to his heart. But what gave him the most satisfaction was the fact that, to use his own expression, "he was above board;" that is, he had paid all of his bills and had sufficient capital on hand to command success during the coming theatrical season.

But one toast was proposed and that, owing to the absence of wine, was drunk in cold water. At the close of the dinner, the Colonel was called upon for his speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "this is a most auspicious occasion. It is good to see old friends together. It causes feelings of sadness when they are called upon to part, but that sadness is tempered by the fact, if it is a fact, that they are going out into the world to win success

in different lines of endeavor. Speaking for myself, the way lies straight before me. I have a fine play, or it will be when certain additions, subtractions, and multiplications are made. The lady who sits at my left hand will assume one of the stellar roles. When I say it is with great regret I learn that I cannot count upon the services of the lady who sits at my right hand, in another stellar role, I know you will believe me. I do not know what path in life she has selected for the future, but I wish her every possible success, and I call upon you all to rise and drink a toast to her future happiness and prosperity."

"Are you not jealous, Mrs. Hix?" asked Olney, who sat beside her.

She shook her head. "Not at all. He is mine now; besides, you know, considerable latitude of expression is always allowed theatrical managers."

The next morning Mr. David Dalton asked for the favor of a private interview with Winnifred.

"I cannot find words," he said, "to express my gratitude to you for the interest that you have taken in Martha and the great kindness you have shown to her. You may not know it, but I am a very wealthy man, or I shall be when I return to Montana and take possession of my property there."

"I am glad to learn this, for your sake and for Martha's," said Winnifred.

"I have talked it over with my wife, and we feel that we ought to make some substantial acknowledgement to you. It is my wish, in which Martha joins, that you should accept a gift from us. I can place twenty thousand dollars in your hands without feeling it, and both Martha and I shall be greatly pleased if you will accept it."

"I cannot do it, Mr. Dalton," said Winnifred. "What I have done for Martha has been done willingly and without

hope of reward, and it would detract from the pleasure which it has given me to help her if I should receive pay for it."

"Well," said David, "I respect your feelings, and I will not press our wishes upon you. But there is another favor that you can do us if you will."

"I shall return to New York very soon," said Winnifred.

"I had presumed so, and that is what leads me to proffer my second request. I am going to take Martha, her father, and little Davy away from Snickersville. Now that her good name is restored, Martha cares nothing for the place, and, unfilial as it may seem, I cannot bring myself to live in the same town with my father, after what he has done to me and mine. Besides, my great business interests require that I shall live in the West. I shall take my family with me eventually, but I must go West first, look into the condition of my property, and settle matters which may have become involved."

"Oh, I see," cried Winnifred; "you wish me to stay here and be company for Martha until you return."

"Oh, no," said David, "I do not intend to presume so much on your kindness. Now, what I wish you to do for me is this: We will all go to New York; I will hire a flat or furnished house. Will you stay with them and look after them until I go West, arrange my business matters, and come back for them? Father Atwood has a purchaser for his farm, and the sale of the old homestead will break the only tie that binds him to this place."

"I cannot refuse your request," said Winnifred, "for I shall certainly profit as much, and even more by it, than you will."

About noon, Winnifred had a visit from Eben Wilkes.

"Have you been to dinner?" asked Winnifred.

"No, I'm loafin'," said Eben. "I squared up with Mr. Barnett and left him this morning. You may laugh, and I know you will, but I've given up all idea of becomin' a lawyer. I'm going to turn farmer, and what's more, I'm going to be a married man very soon."

Winnifred expressed great astonishment. "Why, who can it be? I had always supposed that I—"

"Oh, yes," cried Eben, "but you were only foolin'. Sally Winkle has consented to become Mrs. Eben Wilkes. Her father is goin' to give her a thousand dollars, and, would you believe it, I've bought the Atwood house and everything in it, and we're goin' to live there."

Winnifred held out her hand: "Let me tender my most sincere congratulations, Eben. Miss Winkle is a fine young woman, and I know that you will make her a good husband. Why, the air seems full of weddings."

"Oh, mine ain't the only one. I suppose you've heard that Abigail March is going to marry Enoch Scales?"

"Oh, no," said Winnifred, "but I suppose I shall get an invitation from Mr. Scales, at least."

"No, I guess you won't, and nobody else. Enoch says he isn't goin' to throw away money for nothing. They're goin' right up to Squire Rodgers' to be married, and then they're goin' right home. Tildy is gettin' better. Doctor Danby says she will be on her feet again before long."

"What will the Deacon do?" asked Winnifred.

"Oh, Miss Putney is goin' to keep house for him, and Abigail says he couldn't have made a better choice, for when he dies, she can lay him out and it won't cost nothin', for it will be counted in with her wages."

Grandsire Atwood found Central Park an acceptable substitute for the green fields, and trees, and flowers, to which he had been accustomed in Snickersville. Martha was frightened by the noise and turmoil of the great city,

and, for some time, would not go out except in Winnifred's company.

Winnifred was surprised one afternoon, while Martha, Grandsire Atwood, and little Davy were out walking in the Park, by the sudden appearance of a visitor in the person of Rev. Franklin Merrill.

"Why, what brought you here?" she asked, in confusion.

The magnet — the loadstone of love — which has led other men to travel thousands of miles, while I have come only a paltry three hundred."

"How did you leave the folks in Snickersville?" she asked, uncertain just what to say.

"I have left there, I hope, for good. I have accepted a call to Prestonia. It is a manufacturing city, but the church is far removed from the factories and workshops, and I think it will be a haven of rest for me after my experiences in Snickersville—" he stopped—"if the woman I love will go with me and take charge of the parsonage. I am to assume my new duties a month from now, and I am very anxious to take a wife home with me so that we may begin our life work together."

They had a home wedding, but it was not so ambitious as the one at which the final words of love had been spoken — words which had sealed their fates. The ceremony was delayed for a week until the return of Mr. David Dalton, who, with Martha, Grandsire Atwood, and Colonel and Mrs. Hix, formed the bridal party. Martha insisted upon furnishing the wedding costume, a simple but expensive travelling dress, and Winnifred was obliged to submit or hurt the feelings of her friends.

Let us look back into the library of the parsonage at Prestonia soon after Rev. Franklin Merrill's arrival home. He was seated at the library table, busily engaged upon

the first sermon which he was to deliver to his new congregation. Mrs. Merrill sat near a window. She had been reading a book, but dropped it idly in her lap and looked out at the scene before her. The sun was setting, and the heavens were tinted a pale pink. Not far distant was the river which supplied water-power for the many mills and factories along its banks. Far beyond was a range of hills, the trees upon which, with their red, yellow, and variegated colored leaves, denoted the departure of summer and the approach of winter.

"The view makes me think of Snickersville," said Winnifred, turning to her husband. "Oh, I beg your pardon, Frank. I forgot that you were so busy."

"Oh, I have just finished Fifthly," said he; "there is only one more — and that is short. By the time I have reached it, I know that my congregation will think I have said enough. Theoretically, I believe in short sermons, but practically, I am like the rest of the cloth, and, when I get to writing, I don't know when to stop; and, what is worse yet, when I am delivering my sermon, I am apt to put in a great deal that I have never written down."

"Every church ought to have a stage manager," said Winnifred. "He would take your manuscript, use the blue pencil, and teach you the masterly art of condensation. We never waste words upon the stage."

"Perhaps not," said her husband. "As you are no longer connected with it, I may be pardoned for remarking that a good many of them are wasted so far as any good influence is concerned."

"Now, let us stop right here, Frank," said Winnifred, "for if we don't we shall get to arguing about the church and the stage and their respective merits. I have left my past life behind me, but while I was on the stage I enjoyed

it, and I would not have given up the life but for one which I know I shall enjoy much more — that of a happy wife."

"You are right, Winnifred," said her husband, "and now I will even up matters by saying that, in a great many sermons, many words are wasted because they are too full of rhetoric and have too little of the fire of life in them. Grammar is a cold product of the head, not a warm extract of the heart."

There was a ring at the door-bell and both listened intently for the outcome. Annette, the Swedish serving maid, entered, and placed some letters upon the library table. Mr. Merrill looked them over, then arose and handed them to his wife.

"They are all for you, Winnifred."

Womanlike, she looked at the postmarks before opening them.

"Oh," she cried, "here is one from Renwick, New Hampshire. That must be from Olney. One from Laconia — who can have written to me from there? Oh, I am sure it must be Mr. Dodd. Then here is one post-marked Willoughby. I think it is Mandy's writing. Irvington-on-Hudson — that must be from Miss Dumasresque — I mean Miss Day. There is no doubt about this one — Dolby City, Montana — from Martha. Oh, here is another one — from New York City. I know that scrawl — Colonel Hix is a very poor writer."

She read them through quickly, one after another, gleaning the meaning of each; then she read each one carefully. When she finished the last one, she looked up. As she did so, her husband laid down his pen.

"Are you through?" she asked.

"Yes, I have just finished Sixthly. It has opened up a new line of thought, and I think I could keep on to

tenthly, but I do not wish to get the reputation of being prosy, so I will keep my ideas for another sermon."

"That is very wise of you, Frank. Make it short, sharp, and to the point. That is what brings down the house. Oh, I forgot, they don't applaud in churches."

"I sometimes wish they did," said Mr. Merrill. "It would give us poor clergymen some encouragement. It is hard work talking to an audience which can express signs neither of approval nor disapproval."

"Now, put your sermon away," cried Winnifred, "and let me read these letters to you. Just think of it! What a long way some of them have come."

Her husband laughed. "This planet of ours used to be considered a huge affair, but since the days of steam and electricity, which have given us the Pullman train, the telegraph, and the telephone, it is a very small world after all."

"I don't know which one to read first," she said. "I will shuffle them up and trust to luck."

"Don't try to tell my fortune with them," he said, with a laugh.

"Oh, Miss March is provided for. You need have no fear now. Come near the window with me," she said, and she changed her seat to a low divan. "The first one is from Mr. Dodd. I am going to leave out the beginnings and endings of all the letters, for there is such a great variety in them that they might be confusing to you. Mr. Dodd says:

"Here we are up in Laconia. Mr. Thoroughbrace has got a nice hotel with twenty-five rooms. His wife Abby is a great cook. She makes the biggest and best doughnuts I ever saw in my life. You ought to see Mr. Thoroughbrace eat. He says he has been half starved ever since he left home and that it will take him at least six months to catch up. We only sell cider and light

beer. Mr. Thoroughbrace says he has seen enough of the evils of drink not to help send any more folks to perdition. We're doing well so far, and if Mrs. Thoroughbrace keeps up to the mark on her cooking, we shall all make a fortune before we get through.

"P. S. There is an amateur theatrical company up here. I have joined it and I am going to play *Othello* two weeks from to-morrow night."

Winnifred laughed: "As Colonel Hix says, the theatrical fever is like malaria. You may think you have cured it, but it is likely to show itself again at any time."

"Do you think you are in any danger of suffering a relapse?" asked her husband.

"Not if you keep me right here with you and never let me go away unless you go with me."

"I shall watch you," he said, "and care for you, for you are worth more to me than the richest gem in the world."

"The second is from Olney. You don't object to my calling him Olney? I can't bear that name Uriel, and gray is a color that I always detested. His letter is very short:

"Mary and I are enjoying the best of health. I am a gentleman farmer. By that I mean that I do the bossing and hired men do the work. We have a fine span of horses. Mary enjoys driving, and you will remember that I know how to handle the ribbons — and also a leathern strap when it becomes necessary. Besides, I have plenty of fresh air, good food, regular hours, and a long night's sleep. We take a dozen newspapers, and we are building up quite a library. I am a gentleman of leisure, and I trust I shall remain so for the rest of my life. Farewell, a long farewell to histrionic greatness."

"Here is one from Colonel Hix, and it sounds just like him:

"I thought I would write to you and tell you that my great spectacular production of Allurio and Adelina is an overwhelming success. Houses are crowded to capacity at each performance. Our printing is said to be

the finest ever put upon bill-boards, and in some cities the police have had to drive away the crowds attracted by it. Mrs. Hix, or Miss Rosa Cholmondeley, as she is called on the bills, is the star; but, as I said at our last dinner at Snickersville, I shall always regret that I could not put your name beside hers; mind you, not above nor beneath it, but beside it.

"I have the greatest advertising dodge of the age. I have supplied my advance men with hundreds of photographs of Miss Cholmondeley in costume. These are sent by mail to the residents of the different cities. On the back of each photograph is printed in gold letters: Admit one to any Performance of Colonel Hix's Great Spectacular Production, entitled Allurio and Adelina. And here comes the joke. They have to give up the photographs to secure admission. In the foyer I have a stall for the sale of reserved seats, and when they are once in, they go like hot cakes. Of course, you see, I have a chance to use the photographs over again."

"Do you call that honest?" asked Mr. Merrill.

"Why not?" said Winnifred. "They get a free admission, which is all that the Colonel promises them. When they get inside, if they choose to stand up they can. I don't see that it is any worse than it is to throw a fly to a fish when you know that he can't bite it and your intention is to make game of him — and you know you like fishing. As to using the photographs over again — why, that is business. And now, here is one from dear old Mandy."

"I protest; she is not old," said Mr. Merrill.

"Neither am I a fowl when you call me a dear little goose. Just listen to this. It isn't very grammatical, but, as you said a little while ago, it comes straight from the heart:

"Plum and me is all right and getting along fine. So is Eben and Sally. Plum and me went over and helped them fix up things. The house looks real nice. I miss Marthy and dear old Grandsire Atwood and most of all,

little Davy, but as the good Book says, What man proposes, God disposes.

"Poor old Mr. Mudge, they have had to send him to the poorhouse. They tried to send him to the legislature again, but there was a man over in Peachley who got more votes, and so he went in. I don't understand it, and I suppose it's all right, but Mr. Mudge needed the job more'n he did.

"We've got a new minister, Elder Cutts, from Peachley. They don't any of us like him as well as we did Mr. Merrill. You can tell him I said so, if you want to."

"When you write to Mrs. Gifford be sure to send her my best regards."

"Oh, how susceptible you are to flattery, Frank. You are just as much pleased with it as an actor when he is called before the curtain. There's more of it," holding up the letter :

"Of course you want to hear about Deacon Dalton. Well, they say Miss Putney is gettin' 'round him, so that he does everything she wants him to do. I heard that he had made his will and left everything to her. I don't suppose David will care if he does, and as for Abigail, she hasn't been inside the house since she married Mr. Scales. But to give the devil his due, she's making Enoch a good wife. He dresses better, his farm looks better, and they go to church reg'lar, and Plum says that they are going to run Enoch for selectman now that Mr. Barnett has left town and gone over to Willoughby. I kinder guess that story about the certificate leaked out in some way. Of course, I don't blame Eben — he didn't owe him any love. But his business fell off and he got out. We've got a new lawyer up here from Concord, and he's a nice little fellow and everybody likes him.

"Last Sunday Plum and me went over to the burying ground and put some flowers on little Stub's grave. I couldn't help crying, and Plum never said a word all the way home.

"I think I've told you all the news. My pen ain't very good and my ink ain't much better, but I guess it will last long enough for Plum and me to send our love to you and yours."

"Only two more. I think I shall read the one from Mr. Dalton first. My dear Mrs. Merrill — Oh, I forgot—

"At last we are settled in Dolby City for good. I found that the late Mrs. Goss had greatly improved my house and grounds; besides, she had furnished the house handsomely; of course, with my money, but as it has come into my possession again, I have no fault to find.

"Father Atwood is delighted with the country and hopes to renew his youth and go down into the mines and work with my men. He has to content himself, however, with working in the garden. Little Davy is as fat as butter and as strong as an ox. Our Western air seems to agree with him, as it does with Martha, for, although she has been here only a short time, she has improved immensely in health and personal appearance. When I married her, she was a pretty girl and, despite all the suffering she has gone through, she is now, in my eyes at least, a handsome woman."

"Isn't that nice of him, Frank?" asked Winnifred.

"Well," he said, "if I were writing a letter, I should use almost identical language."

"Now, listen to this, Frank — and what can I do about it?

"Martha and I are not satisfied that we have so much of this world's goods while you have so comparatively little. She knows that you twice refused my offer of a present, but she is a bright little woman, and has thought out a way which, I think, will overcome all your objections. I have purchased an annuity for you in a New York company, and you will receive an annual income of one thousand dollars, payable in quarterly instalments. She says if you will not accept this money for yourself, that you can use it in your church work. If you do not accept it and return it to the company, it will be the gainer, for they will not pay it back to me. I trust you will not think that we have presumed upon your friendship in doing this. We all join in sending love to you, particularly little Davy, who kissed the letter for Aunt Winnie before I put it in the envelope."

"I shall not let the company keep it," she said, as she laid down the letter.

"One more?" asked Mr. Merrill. "Is it the last for luck, or have you held it back because it was the most important?"

"It is the funniest letter that I ever got in my life, and I haven't the slightest idea what sort of an answer to send. You will have to help me. It is from Miss Ida Day, who played in our company under the name of Idaline Dumaresque. Now, promise me not to laugh until I get through. My dear Mrs. Merrill — Oh, I forgot again —

"I have at last overcome the scruples of my father and mother, and of my Aunt Ida, for whom I was named, the latter being a most determined opponent to my going on the stage, and I have finally decided to adopt the histrionic profession as a permanency. I have engaged Mr. Sidney Steele, whom you will doubtless remember, as my manager, and I have procured a musical comedy from a well known author, paying him outright for the same, with the understanding that I might name it what I wished and make as many changes in it as I desired. I intended to call it "STRANDED," as it relates to the misfortunes of a theatrical company, but to-day I had an inspiration, and I write to tell you what it is, hoping that you will not be offended at my presumption. My inspiration is to call the play "SARAH BERNHARDT BROWN." I will not say another word, but will allow you to decide the matter without any argument on my part.

"Trusting that you and your husband are well, I am,
Sincerely yours,

IDALINE DUMARESQUE.

"P. S. I forgot to say that I will give one thousand dollars for the name of which you have never made any use, and will return your diamond ring in addition."

"May I laugh now?" asked Mr. Merrill.

"Yes, if you wish to," said Winnifred, "but I think it is a very serious matter. I don't know whether to be indignant with her or not."

"I don't see how you can," said her husband. "She

has told the truth. She has offered you a very handsome equivalent for something that is of no future use to you."

"Why, how is that?" asked Winnifred, a little sharply. "Is not my right name Sarah Bernhardt Brown Merrill?"

"Well, I suppose it is," said he, "but don't you think that is a union of the stage and the church, which, if not contrary to law, is, at least, somewhat at variance with the understanding existing between us?"

Winnifred did not reply. She felt that it was no use to discuss the matter. She went to the library table, opened the drawer which had been allotted to her, and took out a box of stationery. While she wrote, her husband gazed out of the window. She came and sat down beside him.

"How will this do?" she asked.

"MY DEAR MISS DUMARESQUE:

I have your letter and have talked the matter over with my husband. You may have the name and welcome. As you say, it has been of little use to me. I cannot accept any money equivalent, but shall be pleased to receive my ring so that I may return it to the giver. At one time we were engaged to be married, but we both thought better of it. You will remember how and where it came into your possession. I have a husband, good health, and happiness. I do not need the money which you offer me and under no circumstances would accept it.

"Wishing you both fame and financial success in your chosen profession, I am,

Yours faithfully,

"Will that do?" she asked.

"I have two criticisms to make," he replied. "You say you have a husband, but you do not use any qualifying adjective, although you speak of good health. But we will let that pass."

"Anything else wrong with it?" she asked.

"Well, in such a case, I do not suppose that two negatives would be considered an affirmative, but you twice refused to accept the money."

"Well, I know Miss Dumaesque a great deal better than you do, Frank. I wish to bring that point out strongly, for it would be just like her to send it to me. You know, some people who are wealthy, like to patronize those who are not."

"Well," said her husband, "I withdraw my objections. Address the envelope and I will mail it after supper."

"I haven't put my name to it. Why, do you know, I haven't written a letter since we were married. How shall I sign it?"

"I don't see that you have much choice," he replied. "You have sold your own name, and the only one you have left is mine."

"No, sir, you are very much mistaken," she answered. "I have my professional name."

"Still open to a previous objection — the union of stage and church."

"Well, I can't help it," she cried. "I shall always love my stage name, for it recalls many, many happy days. As I left the stage because I love you more than I do it, you should, I think, be willing for me to retain my name."

"Your argument is unanswerable," he said. "It was your name when I won you, and you may wear it as long as you will." He took her in his arms and kissed her.

She broke away from him and ran to the table. "How will this look?" she cried, and she wrote at the close of the letter her stage name, and to it added the surname of her husband.

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